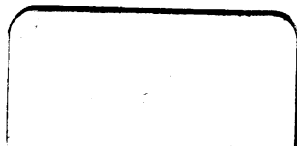


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SEA FIGHTERS

NAVY YARNS OF THE GREAT WAR

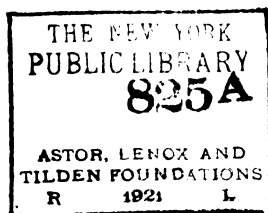
BY
WARREN H. ^{oe}MILLER
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SEA FIGHTERS

PEASE OF THE NAVY

THE Peases are Navy people. Ever since Congress voted Commodore Pease ten numbers for gallantry in action at Vera Cruz in '43, there have been several of them in the service in every generation. During the Civil War, one of them went down in the ill-fated U. S. S. *Cumberland* before the ram of the *Merrimac*, firing his last guns as the waves surged over them; while another led the van on the U. S. S. *Varuna* when Farragut forced the forts before New Orleans. During the Spanish War, a Pease, "Crinky" by Annapolis nickname, in command of a converted yacht or "spit kit" as they were facetiously termed in the Navy, engaged and sank four Spanish gunboats in an action off the south shore of Cuba. Crinky Pease came out of that fight in great gusto—his decks all combed with the machine gun and rifle fire—a thirteen-pounder shell through his engine room missing the main steam pipe by just three inches—happy as a lark, without having lost one of his men.

After the Spanish War, his two sons, Rodman and Willis, both went to Annapolis, as the only possible

school for a Pease. Roddy, the elder, graduated at the foot of his class and the head of his football team and went right into the torpedo-boat service, a specialty that he took to like a duck to the water! Willis, the younger, passed high in his studies and was assigned to engineer duty.

Later, in the Philippine ruction, Roddy was there—it was a way he had of being generally on hand when opportunities for a fight came up—and far down in some forgotten island where the Moros were holding a stockade, he came upon the Tenth Infantry about to assault the fort and carry it by storm. It did not take Roddy half an hour to get permission to cable his admiral for orders to “assist” in the fight—in point of concrete fact, to land a detachment of blue-jackets with a machine gun and help “board the fort in a seamanlike manner.” Sawing a hole through the stockade with the gun, after herculean labor in hauling it up the hill, he and his bluejackets, plus as many of the Army as could crowd in, charged into the gap, and, after a hot fight, cleaned out every Moro in the enclosure. One huge black hurled an assegai at Roddy, just as the latter shot him down with his service Colt, and after the row, Roddy went back to pick up the assegai as a keepsake. In due course of time it went to Crinky Pease’s study, somewhere in California, where the old captain was ending his days *en retrait*, and was hung up on the wall amid chortles of parental joy, while the mother looked on with proud

tears of mixed anxiety and satisfaction. Roddy got three numbers from Congress and was mentioned in dispatches by the admiral. A material sea dog, no less!

Meanwhile, Willis was accumulating a "molly" reputation in the Bureau of Navigation, which directs the destinies of officers, earning that sort of mingled pity and contemptuous respect which the fighting man accords the scientist with no fight in him. Whatever else he was, he was not a typical Pease. Took after his mother, most likely; one of those little, insipid persons whom a Navy man is apt to "fall for" during his infrequent social ventures ashore. What Crinky could ever have seen in her was more than his classmates could fathom; she was considerable of a musician, that was probably it. Willis played, too; his most popular moments aboard ship were those when, seated at the wardroom piano, he would render "My Old Kentucky Home" or "Old Black Joe" in great, soulful, tragic chords, while the homesick wardroom gathered around to sing and grow sentimental.

Willis's absurd Annapolis nickname, "Mike," stuck to him and followed him all over the service. That he had no nerve, that he could be made to blush to the tips of his big red ears, that any sudden scare would send this blush mantling to his face like a girl, Annapolis was not slow to discover. And when the blush was on him it made him look so absurdly like the florid, red countenance of the big Irish boxing master that to name him after Fighting Mike was the simul-

taneous inspiration of a dozen wags among the plebes. Willis, *alias* "Mike," was never known to "drag a feem" at any of the class hops; his awkward attempts at class athletics were pathetic; and, in spite of an eager willingness to do his part, he was soon dropped as impossible. This drove him to the bosom of the "grinds," and as these latter have no bosom, properly speaking, he became a lonely figure, that despised of all students, a professor's pet.

After graduation his nervousness and lack of *savoir-faire* made him an impossibility aboard a fighting ship. Rigid Navy etiquette, where every act of the least midshipman must be carried off with a certain fluency under the eyes of fussy captains and watch officers, the essential necessity of a certain ease of deportment when on foreign station or when a visiting fleet entailed social obligations—in these Willis was totally lacking and such affairs simply scared him into a misery of awkwardness. The fact that he was slender and good looking, also Crinky Pease's son, at first caused his various captains to send him on little errands of courtesy, such as to be entrusted with some verbal message to officer friends in the fleet, and these poor Willis invariably managed to muddle up so hopelessly that a return of some other youngster back to his own captain was needed to straighten the matter out. He was even known to forget to salute the flag on coming aboard ship, or to fail to acknowledge the officer of the deck, through sheer nervous-

ness, and so, in due course of time, whenever the question of assigning Willis to a ship came up, it was a matter of course to put him on some collier or beef boat where his opportunities to "run with the ball" would be infrequent.

Then came the Great War. Like millions of other red-blooded citizens, the Peases chafed in silence at our long months of swallowing insult, of glozing over the nation's plain duty to its pledged word, of evading all the ordinary obligations of manhood until it seemed as if God had forgotten the United States altogether and did not care very much if we existed or no. But at last the great word "WAR" went forth, and the load of shame and dishonor was lifted. Crinky Pease hurried to Washington and assumed a departmental desk, releasing some younger man for a ship; and soon thereafter Roddy disappeared from the ken of friends and relatives to turn up later on a crack destroyer in European waters.

Willis, hoping that at last the exigencies of war would give him a real ship, opened his orders with trembling fingers. He read in the usual curt, numbered paragraphs: "(1) Detached from shore duty with the Inland Academy. (2) Proceed at once to the U. S. S. *Iceberg*. (3) Report for engineer duty on same." His eyes filled with tears as he dashed the letter on the floor and ground it under his heel, hastily picking it up again and smoothing it out, as he realized that it bore certain indorsements on its back and

would require still others before it finally returned to a pigeonhole in the Bureau of Navigation!

A beef boat! A supply ship! The "mess kit," the fleet was sure to nickname her, when attached to the squadron! Middies right out of the Academy would get at least the steerage of fighting ships, while he, a Pease, an ensign four years graduated, would go into the Great War on a beef box! True, she mounted four submarine guns, and two or three quick-firers and anti-aircraft weapons, but he wouldn't get so much as a look over their muzzles, but, down in the bowels of the vessel, a prize target for U-boat torpedoes, he would be one of the "also rans."

Well, it was the part of a Pease to shut his mouth and make no kick. Others might raise a howl, or "sick" a congressman on the department; he could even appeal to his father to pull wires for a better berth; but that wasn't the Pease way, either. He reported. At least she would go to sea with the fighting squadrons!

But for months thereafter the *Iceberg* went with patrol squadrons on our own coast, a most humdrum and peaceable occupation, doling out tons of beef from the hatch nets, keeping her freezer engine going, issuing millions of dollars' worth of supplies of every conceivable character from a spit kit to a steam launch—she was no more than a floating Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. And meanwhile Roddy and his destroyer were being "heard from" in Europe!

But at length the home army was trained and the *Iceberg* was attached to a convoy squadron going to France. Navies travel on their bellies, as well as armies, and so the old beef box was the fleet's most cherished possession, and the one most likely to be downed by a Hun submarine, for next to sinking a ship full of soldiers, sinking the supply ship and putting the naval convoy on a diet of ship stores would be the enterprise most attractive to the Teuton mind—as producing the maximum of results at the minimum risk! Willis felt that if there was to be any excitement, his ship was tolerably certain to be in the thick of it, if being the target of a submarine can be accorded that enviable position! Also, that his part in it would, most likely, *not* be the joy of smashing periscopes up there in God's blue sky and sea, but instead, sudden extinction down in the dark electric-lit engine room, with the blinding glare of the torpedo and the avalanche of incoming sea as his last glimpse of life.

And so they dipped and rose over the cold, gray Atlantic in the early spring gales, the long double line of fighting cruisers surrounding the army transports, all with their prows pointed to France, the world's field of glory for centuries past.

“Rossak to the mast!”

They made a funny group on the quarter-deck of the U. S. S. *Iceberg*, six human beings, solemnly fac-

ing each other. On the officers' side, the captain in the center, boredly twirling his mustache; at his right the executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Hugh Adams, choking back gusts of merriment that threatened to engulf discipline; at his left, Ensign Willis Pease, the accusing officer, in a blue funk of nervousness, trying to remember his part in the regulations, like a schoolboy who has forgotten his piece. On the enlisted men's side stood Rossak, the accused, in the center, a great hulking Teuton, his face a flood of frightened tears; on his right, Jimmy Legs, the master-at-arms, thickset, stern, and impersonal; on his left the witness, Bill Barlow, first class machinist, whose turn at the mast would come next—for the mere matter of trying to brain Rossak with a spanner wrench because the latter had said that the Americans blew up the *Maine* to bring on the Spanish War.

"Proceed, Mr. Pease," muttered the captain dryly.

Willis Pease blundered on unhappily: "M-Mister Barlow——"

"There is no such person on the ship!" interrupted the captain angrily.

Hugh Adams suppressed a snort of laughter. "Take your time, Mike," he whispered behind the captain's back.

Willis blinked back tears of exasperation. Why was he so damn nervous when in the least called upon to assert himself in public, anyhow!

"I saw Barlow chasing Rossak around the main

condenser with a spanner wrench, and Mister Kopke ——” he continued.

“Who is *Mister* Kopke, may I ask?” inquired the captain icily.

“Machinist Kopke, first class,” corrected Pease hastily. “Kopke stuck out his foot and tripped Barlow——”

“And I’m a son of a sea cook if I don’t plant me hooks in his deadlights for it, too!” broke in Barlow.

“Silence!” thundered the captain. “Don’t you speak until you are called on, Barlow. Go on, Mr. Pease.”

“It seems that Rossak was making some disloyal remarks down in the engine room, and Barlow got after him with a spanner——” went on the ensign confusedly.

“Confine yourself to what you saw and heard, Mr. Pease,” interrupted the captain. “Did you *hear* the alleged remarks?”

“No; but—well, I guess that is all my actual testimony, captain,” concluded Pease suddenly, relapsing into silence.

“That will dō, Mr. Pease—I will see you in my stateroom shortly. Now, Barlow.”

“Well, captain, dis guy here, he says t’me, says he, ‘Yermanny’s all right, an’ America’s all wrong about dis here war,’ he says, ‘an’ what is more,’ he says, ‘you Americans blowed up the *Maine* yerselves,’ he says, ‘n’ then I gives him two seconds to take it back, ‘n’ then I starts for him wid a spanner—th’ lousy Dutch-

man—an' I'd 've gotten him, too, if Kopke hadn't tripped me foot——"

"That'll do, Barlow," interrupted the captain. "Master-at-arms, Kopke to the mast."

Presently the Jimmy Legs returned, escorting Kopke. A smooth, blue-eyed, beery customer was Kopke, his Teuton descent sticking out all over him. He was the model machinist of the engine room, quiet, efficient, deferential, considered one of the best recruits off the receiving ship.

"Kopke, did you overhear any conversation between Rossak and Barlow?" queried the captain.

"Oh, it was nothing, captain," replied Kopke easily, "just one of those arguments that we men occasionally have——"

"Do you recall what was said?"

"Not exactly, sir; something about the *Maine*, I believe——"

"He was right dere, capt'in," broke in Barlow eagerly, "an' he hoid every woid."

"Silence! Kopke, it's beyond belief that any American sailor could have overheard such remarks as have been reported with such indifference as you seem to display. State just what you heard."

"I really wasn't paying much attention, captain——" began Kopke smoothly.

"Did you trip up Barlow?"

"No—he stumbled over my foot."

"The case is dismissed!" declared the captain hopelessly. "Master-at-arms, release the accused."

He turned on his heel and the party left the quarter-deck. Ten minutes later, Ensign Pease stood silently before him in the privacy of the captain's stateroom.

"Mr. Pease," barked the captain angrily, "how are we to preserve the dignity of a trial at the mast if you are going to conduct yourself as you did this morning? Your grandfather would have turned in his grave, your father would have spanked you out of hand, your brother Rodman would have held his head in shame for the Pease name, if any of them could have witnessed you this morning—at a mere mast trial of enlisted men—what is the matter with you, sir?" The captain glared at the slender ensign under his bushy gray brows.

"Captain, I don't seem to make good at this life," spoke out Pease impulsively. "The family sent me to Annapolis, as a matter of course, and I have been the butt of the whole Navy ever since. I get so nervous when called on to say or do the least thing, that I always bungle. I cannot help it—it's born in me!"

The captain regarded him in silence for some time. "I suppose we cannot help it if you are not a regular Pease like your brother Rodman, Willis," he said at length. "I know your father well. We were ship-mates several times, and a braver and more gallant officer never breathed! It's not your fault that you did not take after him. Let's do the best we can.

"Who is Kopke?" he broke off in a more kindly tone as if to change an unpleasant subject.

Willis's eyes brightened. "He's a jewel, sir!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "The best man in my watch. Always neat and accurate, nothing ever wrong with the engines when he's about—never had to report him for anything whatever——"

"Ye-es; he's too damned *nice*, you know," returned the captain warily. "Now, for God's sake, Willis, don't add innocence to the rest of your shortcomings. You heard him deliberately kill that trial this morning, didn't you? I could do nothing, with only one witness against this Rossak—and you know damn well that he could have told all that was necessary. We'd have had both of them in the brig—that's just the reason your paragon found his memory suddenly so very poor. Now, Mr. Pease, you *watch* that man from now on—that's an order, sir; do you hear it?"

"Yes, sir; but I sincerely hope you are wrong——"

"That'll do," interrupted the captain, waving him out of the stateroom impatiently.

Willis stood irresolute for a moment or two, and then bowed himself out. He went at once to his stateroom and tried to reflect on the captain's admonition concerning Kopke. So far as he could recall, Kopke seemed faultless, his one error, a serious and irreparable one though it was, having been satisfactorily explained away.

This mistake happened when the *Iceberg* was in

dry dock some months before, overhauling for sea duty. Among other things about the engine room it had devolved upon Kopke to repack the stuffing box of the ship's screw shaft. Where this great bar of steel projects out of the ship's stern, carrying the propeller, there is a stuffing box inside to prevent the water coming in along the shaft. It is packed with huge turns of greasy black packing as big as a hawser, four or five turns being packed in the box around the shaft. Kopke had cut them all short, explaining that the shaft had a larger diameter inside the box than in the shaft bearings and he had cut the packing to fit the shaft as measured in the bearings, and so, when he put it in the box, they all came a trifle short, but he hoped that the compression of the bushing would make it tight.

It did nothing of the sort; for when the *Iceberg* was floated, a small but steady leak began into the afterpeak, and it was too late to remedy it without putting the ship back in dry dock again. For so small a leak as it seemed—it amounted to about nineteen tons of water a watch, though, when measured later—the captain would not ask the department for a redocking, contenting himself with a severe reprimand for both Willis and the machinist, and so they had put to sea. Since then they had to keep the afterpeak pump going most of the time, but nothing suspicious had happened after that, except the finding of waste rags in the suction pipe of the afterpeak on two occa-

sions when at sea *en route* for France. Both times the pump refused to suck, and one of them happened to be in a hurricane, when the whole shaft tunnel became flooded with water before the trouble could be located.

Now that Willis thought it over, that packing might *not* have been cut short, nor that waste have been dropped in the afterpeak by accident. These were war times, and if anyone needed an eye on them in his watch it would be the two Teutons, Rossak and the incomparable Kopke. The *Iceberg* was the dinner pail of the fleet, Willis reflected; next to one of the transports, she would be the one ship that the German Admiralty would try particularly to "get." What surer way to be rid of her, he realized with a sudden electric thrill, than to have a trusted spy slack off the bolts of the screw stuffing box—and sink her! Willis could picture that scene: some black hour after midnight in the twelve-to-four watch—his watch!—some traitorous member of their own crew, even, at work in the dim darkness of the afterpeak—once the last two bolts were unscrewed, that leaky packing would blow out like a cork—and nothing on earth could save the *Iceberg* from foundering.

Two nights later Willis was awakened by an unusual occurrence, the cessation of the regular throb of the engine. He jumped out of his berth in the ward-room. Outside his porthole he could hear hoarse

shouts, and, looking out over the black racing waters, he saw here and there twinkling lights that flashed signals. The destroyer convoy! Somewhere out in the Atlantic, off the broadside of the French coast, they had met their destroyer escort. Presently a launch ranged alongside and an officer went up the gangway. Under the glare of a searchlight Willis watched the two seamen holding the grim, gray, iron shell of the warship launch off the ship's sides with long boat hooks. The forward man, a tall, rangy Middle Westerner, with no chin, and barefooted in spite of the freezing weather, hung tenaciously to the pole, meeting the surge of the sea with powerful thrusts of his body. Astern, a short, stocky, hook-nosed sea dog, also barefooted, with his pants rolled up nearly to his knees, jammed his boat hook into a big iron ring in the ship's skin. Willis could not have lived out there five minutes without his overcoat on, but these men were true barnacles of Neptune's trident, real men of the sea. Yet his own brother, Roddy, was almost as rugged. Why hadn't Nature given *him* some of Crinky Pease's iron stamina!

The swash of waves told of a destroyer ranging alongside. She passed at half-cable length and seemed to stop a little in front of the *Iceberg's* bows. Looking astern Willis saw a second destroyer in line with the first, while between them a set of floats showed the line of the torpedo net, spread like a screen, protecting the *Iceberg's* sides from submarine attack. Some-

where out yonder over the dark waters were, no doubt, the flanking destroyers, with their ready depth bombs, guarding the net trailers; he wondered if Roddy was on one of them.

The *Iceberg's* engines began to throb again and she took her place in the line of ships proceeding to France. Willis could hardly sleep with excitement, and it seemed but a minute before the machinist of the eight-to-twelve watch was poking him in the ribs with the announcement, "Twenty minutes to twelve, sir!"

He dressed hurriedly and went on deck before going below to take over his watch. The range lights showed the *Iceberg* in the transport line, with a double line of destroyers to port and starboard, so that the whole convoy pushed on to France steaming down a guarded lane. Far out over the waste of waves was the fleet, its searchlights scouring the seas for submarines, while the flanking destroyers patrolled the adjacent waters within torpedo range. Willis went below, looked at his fires, felt his bearings, and relieved McIntyre, the ensign of the eight-to-twelve.

"Everything's O. K. but the afterpeak—she's plugged again," grinned that worthy. "Wish you luck of it!"

This time Willis found the shaft tunnel awash and the suction pipe clogged with a solid ball of waste, evidently rolled that way by human hands, and he was now convinced that someone on board was bent on at least jeopardizing the ship's safety by putting

that pipe out of commission. It took nearly the whole watch to get the pump throwing again. Toward the end of it, when Willis stood drowsing over the engine room desk, the speaking tube to the bridge suddenly screeched. He opened it hastily, to get the startling hail, "Periscope! Broad on the starboard bow, sir!"

Willis jumped into the fireroom. "Torpedo stations!" he yelled, "All hands stand by your battle positions! Look lively now! Six first-class firemen on each boiler! All oilers and second-class machinists to engine room!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" shouted Barlow.

"Aye, aye, begorra!" echoed Sullivan, a first-class fireman.

"Aye, ready-O!" shouted others.

"F'r th' luv of Gawd, Mr. Pease, ye'll not be sending up old Micky Malone!" begged a gaunt old Irishman, the best man on the forward boilers, coming hastily around from one of the side passages. "Ye'll not be sending old Micky away, ensign darlint!"

"No, not you, Mike," beamed Willis. "You get me one hundred and fifty pounds of steam on the forward boilers! You six, tend the after fires, and you, Barlow, and you, Kopke, stay in the engine room with me!" Just then their own guns began to speak, their jar on the ship vibrating down to them, even above the throb and whistle of the engine room.

Man after man of the other watches came tumbling down the iron stairway from the deck, each one salut-

ing as he ran to his battle station. Presently the clash of a sword against iron railings announced Lieutenant Andrews, the chief, followed by McIntyre of the eight-to-twelve. "I brought you down yours, Willis," laughed the latter nervously, handing him his sword. "It's battle stations, you know, and you had best put yours on—mind the Blue Book, old top—it's reg., you know!"

A cheer from up on deck floated to them amid the barking of guns and the thud of others fired far at sea, felt through the ship's sides. Suddenly Paine, an oiler, came running down the four ladders which led from the cylinder tops to the engine room floor. "We think they've got her, Mr. Pease," he gurgled. "It's almost dawn and we could see two destroyers make for where the periscope was last seen, and—say, it was fine—they dropped depth bombs and you could see the spouts, a dozen of them—how any sub could live under such fire seems impossible!"

"Thanks, Paine, but get out of here; you're not supposed to come down here at all; and if the chief sees you——"

Paine vanished, and Willis went around back of the main condenser to test the air-pump bearings. Kopke should have been on duty here, but he was nowhere to be seen. With a flash of suspicious recollection, Willis dashed on aft to the shaft alley. Suppose those devils——

He set down the smoky torch outside the tunnel and

crept along the planks in pitchy darkness, feeling for the rolling shaft with his left hand.

A dull glow a hundred feet aft down the long iron cavern—someone was in the afterpeak! Willis crept on, catlike. Two dim figures were working over the stuffing box, a lurid torch giving a faint light from the platform at the end of the planking. The water still swashed below, for the pump had not yet cleared out the peak.

Nearer. They each had a wrench and were working feverishly at the huge flange! It had a ring of twenty-four bolts in it, Willis knew—at least ten minutes of fast work to unscrew them all, but—when the last two came off!

Nearer. He was now in the afterpeak itself, ten feet behind the workers. A ring of bare boltheads stared at him; only four nuts left, and the wrenches went round and round as fast as hands could turn! Willis called on his gods for courage, and silently drew his sword and fastened the sword knot securely around his wrist. It had been the fashion to sneer at this bodkin in the wardroom, as an obsolete weapon of no use compared to a good pine baseball bat—but now!

Two more nuts came off, and now the water came spouting in in a great ring-shaped shower, squirting around the stuffing-box flange and dashing into the faces of the workers. "*Schnell! Geschwind!*" ordered one of them, working furiously at his bolthead.

"Halt!" Willis was surprised at the force of his own voice—it sounded more like Crinky Pease's than the gentle lisp in which he was accustomed to give his orders.

The two turned suddenly, facing him with their backs to the ship's stuffing box—and the lamplight flickered on the faces of Kopke and Rossak!

"Drop those wrenches!" ordered Willis.

"Not *quite* yet, Mr. Pease," retorted Kopke grimly; "we have business for them." An arm movement behind his back appraised Willis that he was still working secretly at the last nut.

"Stop! Don't move, or I'll kill you in your tracks, Kopke!" shouted Willis, springing forward with his sword at point.

"*Not* Kopke, Ensign Pease," said the other suavely, "but Lieutenant von Armheer, of the Imperial German Navy, at your service. Rossak, finish those nuts, while I attend to this crazy Yankee," he grunted, and, brandishing the wrench, he sprang at Willis, who found his poor skill with the sword at once put to the utmost proof.

Willis lunged again, but von Armheer warded with a deft movement of the wrench—oh, he knew single-stick, all right, Willis noted!—and then he beat down Willis's guard with a macelike smash of the wrench. The blow glanced, but the mere touch of it on his shoulder hurt cruelly and it roused in Willis a savage

anger that he never dreamed lay in him. He struck back fiercely, and just as he lunged, with a mighty *Pong!* the flange blew off and a deluge of sea water drove Rossak headlong into them. The sword went right through his fat body, but Willis and von Armheer were so transported with the fury of battle that they hardly noticed him or the water either. Striking and stabbing at each other, they were borne back in a rush of sea foam, like two men in the grip of the surf. The water rose around them and the tunnel planks floated crazily underfoot. With the extinguishing of the torch it had become pitch dark, but still Willis could feel his adversary's steel. He stabbed blindly, the swirling waters now impeding his arms. He felt his point strike bone; he heard a coughing groan and a sudden splash, then Armheer's strokes ceased to seek him out in the inky blackness! He swam on, borne down the tunnel with the racing current, and a few moments later his hands struck an iron wall. It was the bulkhead—but they had closed the sliding water-tight iron gate. He was alone, trapped like a drowning rat—and swiftly, steadily the water rose.

Upon the bridge the captain was straining his eyes over the gray dawn, striving with the roll of the ship to hold the destroyer in the field of his binoculars. Suddenly she flew a line of signal flags. "Submarine's

sunk, sir!" said the grizzled quartermaster, reading them. "It's the *Schley*, Lieutenant Rodman Pease commanding."

"Thank God, we didn't get *that* torpedo!" ejaculated the captain fervently. "Roddy Pease, eh! Always right there! Gad, what a boy! I wish Willis ——" Just then the engine-room speaking tube screeched and the quartermaster jumped to answer it. A hideous expression of fright went over his face. "Goddlemighty, capt'n—the ship's sinking under our feet!" he gasped.

"The ship's sinking! Who says it?"

"Lieutenant Andrews, sir! He says the water's pouring in out of the shaft alley in a flood——"

"Tell him to close the water-tight bulkhead door ——"

"It's being done, sir!"

"Let me at that tube." The captain questioned the chief excitedly. "Here's a fine mess, Adams," he growled at the executive officer, who had come over from the port side of the bridge; "the ship's sinking under us! Andrews says the shaft alley's full of water. He's getting the bulkhead door closed, but there's no telling how long the shaft will run before it works the oil out and the bearings gum fast. Where's Ensign Pease?" he asked, turning to the tube again.

". . . Not there! Put him under arrest when you find him. He was supposed to be on duty in the engine room. I'm coming below at once!

"Take the bridge, Adams!" ordered the captain hastily. "I've got my hands full below! And when Roddy Pease comes aboard—quartermaster, signal the *Schley* to board us as soon as he can—send him on down to the engine room."

A racket of pumps greeted the captain as he reached the top grating around the big cylinder heads. The engine throbbed on endlessly, but above its orderly din rose the shrill click of dozens of pumps. It boded ill, and he hurried down the four ladders, past the flying crossheads and the whirling connecting rods, down to the iron platform at the level of the spinning crank shafts.

"Why all the pumps, Andrews?" shouted the captain above the noise.

"Can't get the bulkhead door shut tight!" yelled the chief. "Some one has jammed a cold chisel in the bottom of the guides and we dare not open it again. We have the tank manholes open and are pumping out all that comes—Look!"

He pointed at the shaft-alley bulkhead door, from under which gushed a flat stream of sea water. "We can just about hold our own until a plug is made," he added.

"Where's Pease?"

"Haven't seen him. Isn't he on deck somewhere?"

The captain stepped to the bridge speaking tube. "Tell Mr. Adams to have my orderly search the ship for Ensign Pease and report," he ordered.

They watched the flow of water, rascinated. A machinist came up to Andrews. "She's gaining on the pumps, sir," he saluted.

"Hook on the evaporator pumps, then—and report," barked Andrews. "We'll have a wooden wedge made to stop it soon, captain; but we can hardly hold her now as it is."

Presently the orderly came down. "Can't find Ensign Pease anywhere, sir," he reported.

The captain looked blankly at Andrews. "What in the devil do you suppose this means, Andrews? Is he—*could* he be *in there*!" he gasped hoarsely, pointing to the shaft alley.

"Not and still be alive—it's full of water!" demurred Andrews, shaking his head. "No it isn't; there must be air trapped along the roof of the tunnel—when the equilibrium of pressure is established, you know——" he corrected.

"God!" jumped the captain suddenly. "Some one is tapping on the inside of that bulkhead! It's he!" They both rushed to the door and put their ears against it. The tapping came from inside, but high up, about where the top of the shaft alley would come.

"Listen! He's signaling Morse!"

They put their ears to the steel plate. *Tap-scrape-tap, tap-scrape, tap-tap-tap!* went the signals. The captain and chief translated the letters together: "Pease—drill hole here with breast drill!" A machinist was hurried to the spot, and swiftly the small bit

sank into the steel. As the man tired, another took his place, a third pouring oil on the drill, and in about ten minutes the drill broke through, and—air whistled out, as from a compressed-air tank!

“Plug up that hole, quick, you’re letting out all the air I’ve got!” came Pease’s voice, and he shut it off on the inside with his own finger. An oiler was hustled up to the doctor’s office to get a small cork and also the surgeon himself, who presently came running down the iron stairs.

Again came a tap in the bulkhead, and the captain jumped to the hole. *“Don’t open the bulkhead door till I tell you!”* came Willis’s voice. “I’ve got a little air that is trapped along the top of the tunnel, and am floating on a couple of shaft-alley planks. Kopke and Rossak were a pair of damned spies, and I caught them taking off the stuffing box flange. Killed Kopke; but they got the flange off—and Rossak is drowned —”

“God! boy, we thought *you* were!” interrupted the captain. “How are we ever going to get you out?”

“I’ve got about half an hour to live,” came Willis’s voice, ringing like iron through the steel. “My head is bursting with the air pressure, and you must soon plug up the hole, for I can not let you have any more of what air I’ve got. *I’m going to put that flange back on again!* It’s the one chance to save the ship!”

“Good-by; God bless you, boy,” said the captain humbling, putting in the plug again. He turned to the

surgeon. "How long can a man live under the air pressure that must be above the water in that tunnel, doctor?"

The surgeon shook his head. "An hour, at most. Divers come out of the bell bleeding at the ears and nose after a half-hour shift. For my part, I'd rather open the door and let the ship go, if we can dash in and save him."

The captain demurred sadly. "These are war times, doctor. Thousands of lives depend upon this ship. If I have to sacrifice an officer to keep her in the line, it shall be done—it is war, no less than on the battlefield."

The captain's orderly touched him on the sleeve. "Lieutenant Rodman Pease, sir," he announced, saluting.

The captain whirled around. "I'm afraid you're here at a very solemn occasion, my boy," said the captain, interrupting the other's greeting and query concerning Willis. "No, your brother's not under arrest—he's covered himself with glory instead—but it's touch and go whether he comes out of it alive."

"Trust a Pease for that!" laughed Roddy. "What's the hero stunt? Willis was never much on heroics."

"Engine-room heroism!" broke in Andrews, with shining eyes. "Captain, it's my turn to speak. Your brother never had any chance for grand-stand plays with the whole fleet looking on, Rod, such as you fellows who escape engineer assignments are always

getting; *but* he has just fought two spies single-handed who tried to sink the ship, killed them both——”

“*Wow!*” yelled Roddy. “Willis!” incredulously. “Willis kill anybody! Well, good for him!”

“Let me finish, please—and is now fighting for his own life, not against men with weapons who can be seen and beaten in the open, but against the pitiless forces of cold science——”

“No! Where?”

“In—*there!*” said Andrews, pointing solemnly at the shaft-alley bulkhead, and he rapidly sketched the situation—“and darned if I know how the boy’s going to get himself out,” he concluded. “There must be three feet of water above that shaft—yet a man might reach it with his feet, and push the flange back on again, now that the water’s quiet in the shaft tunnel, but where would he get the nuts to hold it on with?”

“And, I’m sorry to add, that whatever he does will have to be done quickly, for no man can live under that pressure,” put in the doctor.

Roddy looked at them, aghast. This cold-blooded death, alone, fighting, not men, but cold engineering facts of air pressure and water—alone in the dark, iron tunnel—it was not the way he hoped to meet his end! Rather, far rather, the swift bullet or the bursting shell, with Old Glory floating in the rigging amid the roar of battle, up in the smoke and clouds and the blue sea—*that* was the death he cherished! This clammy iron grave made him quail.

"Can't we chance the bulkhead door, captain?" he queried tremulously. "I'll be the first to dash inside, to rescue my"—his voice shook—"m-my brother!"

The captain shook his head. "No, Roddy, this ship means too much to our country, and *he* would be the first to order us not to try it—he did so, not ten minutes ago, in fact! Here's where we fighting men have to drop out and let brains fight science. Chief, it's up to you; can't you do something?"

They all turned appealingly to Andrews.

"If we had an air compressor aboard ship I could hook her in and blow the water out of that tunnel; but, doc, you say he could not live long under such pressure anyhow."

"Long enough to get the door open and get him out, anyway," burst in Roddy. "Can't you try it somehow?"

The chief bowed his head. "We have no such thing as an air compressor aboard this ship——"

"Dammit!" shouted Roddy. "Somebody think of something! I'm going to speak to him, anyhow!"

He pulled the cork out of the hole and shouted—"Willis!"

No answer.

"*Willis!*" he yelled.

No answer.

They waited hopelessly ten minutes more, Roddy going more and more wild with anxiety.

"Captain, you *must* open that door!" he raved. "I

demand it! What are a few hundred tons of water to a ship like this! I'll get him out, and then you can catch up with the pumps—hook in the main condenser air pump, if necessary——”

Suddenly—*Tap-tap-tap!*

Roddy jumped to the plug. “Hello, Mike!” he yelled.

“Hello! That you, Roddy? Did you get the sub?”

“Yes; dammit, never mind that! How are *you* holding out?”

“I’ve got that flange on, *and shored!* Tell them to open the door! Get all tank manholes open, as there will be a lot of water——”

“Open the door! He’s got her *shored!*” yelled Roddy, dancing about the engine room. “*Open* her, I say!”

A machinist sprang up the stairs to the winch handle. Andrews sent his men scurrying to open all floor-tank hatches so as to drink down all the water the pumps could not take. The door slowly rose. A huge flood of sea water poured out into the crank pit. The cranks took it and whirled it in showers all over the engine room. Other machinists brought turns of packing, ready to dash into the alley and drive it around the flange of the stuffing box for a stop-gap. The water poured on in, into the bilges of engine and boiler room, and surged against the iron plates with each roll of the ship. More came in over the floor,

and the captain looked grave, for it only had three feet more to rise to reach the boiler fires. But the chief reassured him, and the din of the pumps redoubled. Clouds of steam wafted through the engine room like huge vaporous genii, and through it all went on the ceaseless throb of the engine, the ceaseless whirl of the crank shaft, and the endless up-and-down of the pistons and crossheads. The deck officers quailed under this appalling manifestation of forces far beyond their ken—five thousand horsepower let loose in that lurid engine room!

And before them stood yawning the open door of the bulkhead, out of which belched a foam of sea water and great gulps of compressed air. Roddy, holding aloft a torch, dashed in at the head of the rescue party, stemming the current of water up to his waist, dodging the whirling flanges of the main shaft as best he might. On and on, through the darkness he pressed, until he finally made out a dim figure standing beside the stuffing box on a single plank which had lodged across the iron beams as the water had settled. A spray of salt ocean still spurted out all around the shaft, but already there were two bright nuts over the boltheads, and Willis was busily turning on another.

"Dive, boys, dive for them!" he called cheerily. "Thank God we don't need the shores now!"

They looked aloft, and from the dim roof of the tunnel two planks, firmly wedged against the iron

gussets, reached down to the flange of the stuffing box, "shoring" it firmly in its place in the stern bearing. Two machinists plopped down into the depths of the afterpeak and came up with a missing nut in either hand. Willis and the others caught them from their hands and turned them swiftly on the boltheads. By the time a dozen of them were in place, it was safe to knock away the shores and complete the circle of boltheads. Then other men from the engine room started driving in packing between the flange and the bearing, which, while by no means as efficient as the regular packing in its proper place in the bearing, would suffice to hold the water at bay until the ship reached France.

The captain laid an arm on the shoulder of each of the two Peases. "A true-blue Pease, Willis!" he commended, patting them affectionately. "Chip of the old block, Roddy! I wish I could see Crinky Pease when he reads the admiral's mention of you two in orders!"

Willis carefully unwound the gold sword knot from his wrist and wiped the dull blade of his dangling weapon preparatory to replacing it in the scabbard.

"Some bodkin, sir!" he smiled at the captain through his clenched teeth. But the savage glint that still smoldered in his eyes was that of fighting Crinky Pease!

BROTHER TO ICARUS

THE sea was smooth and oily; a thick wrack of mugginess hung over the easy ground swell rolling up from the northeast. The Lion was purring, but the men who sailed over him trusted him not in the least. The U. S. Destroyer *Nottingham*, on patrol maneuvers, clipped over the oily seas, rolling easily as she took them on her starboard bow. The water seemed to race past her slim sides, and the ship herself to be standing still, so silent and smooth was the action of her turbines. Commander Elmer Bradshaw, U. S. N., paced her bridge uneasily. The air he sniffed seemed *too* hot and close; like a proper sailorman he smelled "weather," and after the mild southwest gale of the last few days, this sleek calm foretold big weather ahead.

A messenger came up on the bridge and stood at salute. "Barometer's 29.9, sir," he announced.

"I told you so, Jim!" the commander called across the bridge to the exec., who was also navigator. "We'll have some real sporty doin's around these parts soon."

"Looks nice!" observed that gentleman sarcastically. "Falling barometer, after that little sou'wester! Ought to be piling up on us pretty soon. You wouldn't

think there was a thing the matter with her now, would you!" he purred sardonically, looking out over the glassy sea with its waste of smooth, misty rollers.

"Oh, we'll catch Hades soon enough—don't you worry!" retorted the skipper grimly. "Take the bridge, Jim. I'm going below for a look-see at the glass myself."

He left the bridge and entered the chart house under it. The needle was already sagging below 29.5.

"Thunder and Mars!" he ejaculated, for the commander was not a swearing man. "And the Kid's going to be up in this, too! It'll be a top-notcher Hatteras hurricane, or I'm no sailorman!"

He went aft along the iron decks to the wireless room. "Ayres, get me Ensign Bradshaw on the compass receiver set," he ordered the electrician in charge. Ayres took off his headpiece and put on another that belonged to the little short-range wireless telephone set, used in fleet communication between the destroyers, sub chasers, seaplanes, and blimps that formed the patrol squadron. He shifted switches, calling constantly, and searching for the ensign's bearings with the compass dial on the shaft of the revolving antennæ. It seemed to the commander no less than a marvel from the "Arabian Nights" that that wonderful little instrument would presently let him talk with his younger brother, who was up in a seaplane twelve miles away.

"I have him, sir," said Ayres at length, taking off

the headpiece and handing it to the commander. Bradshaw slipped it over his head and clapped the listening tubes in his ears.

"That you, Les?" he called.

"Sure! Hello, Pa. What's up?" came back the younger brother's careless voice. "Pa" was his teasing nickname for the commander, a comprehensive denial of his parental rights as elder brother.

"What's up?" retorted the commander sternly. "Look at your barometer, man! You clear out—hear me? All hallelujah's going to break loose down here, in shiploads! The glass is 28.8 now, and falling!"

"Aw! Go run a steamboat!" jeered the Kid's voice. "What's a barometer-reading in my young life! *We* use 'em to tell altitude by, son."

"Well, you know what 28.8 means at sea level, don't you?"

"Sure! Low pressure—hard climbing, but this ol' boat'll zoom up ten thousand feet if I want her to——"

"No! *No!* Doggone it!" The commander pounded his fist down on the instrument desk. "You don't understand these big circular storms at *all*, Les. This is going to be a hurricane, Kid, a regular night-blooming swizzle—and it'll take that kite of yours and twist it into splinters at the very first puff. Clear out and make for your shore station at once—that's an order; do you understand?"

A messenger touched him on the shoulder. "Barometer's 28.7, sir!"

The commander waved acknowledgement and went on at the transmitter: "Fly up over it? Doggone it, Les, you can't! You'll get shut up in it, and you haven't gas enough to stay up three days—you couldn't stay up ten hours. The only thing to do is to clear out, and do it on the double. The glass is 28.7 down here now."

"See here, Elmer, I have my orders from the shore station, and I've had no recall yet——" began Leslie huffily.

"Darn your orders; I rank you, and I'll take all responsibility. Start for shore right away—you can get there in three hours. And say, boy, if this thing *does* hit you, face the wind and turn to the *left*; otherwise you'll be going right into the cyclone center—get me?"

"Yea—I got you!" came back the teasing tones. "Only, you old sea turtle, I'll just zoom up over it, and let her rip a hundred miles an hour out of here for home—while your old tin pot will be hammering her way through it at a hundred *feet* an hour! Good-by, you dry-dock. Le's go!"

"Well, beat it, anyway, foolish!" laughed the commander good-naturedly, seeing that he had won his point. "Don't linger; this storm's traveling, and it's going to hit us any minute now."

He took off the receiver and got up from the electrician's chair. An ominous slap of a heavy sea against the destroyer's quarter brought him on deck

on the run. The wind was still faint and variable, almost a flat calm, but out of the northeast huge swells were piling up, one after another, each more majestic than the last. The destroyer was beginning to roll viciously, as she turned in a long circle to face them.

The commander wrestled his way forward past trim pairs of torpedo tubes on their swivel mounts, past the ventilator cowls of the fireroom, and the four slim smokestacks, all camouflaged in jazz paint. He stopped to speak to his gunnery officer, a young ensign seated on the iron stool atop a pair of torpedo tubes, his hat jammed on with the visor backward, his eye glued to the sighting telescope, his hands maneuvering the training wheel.

"Knock off torpedo drill, Barlow, and sound 'Secure!' " he ordered. "Lock every gun and torpedo tube fast; clear away and stow all gear; and lash on the canvas covers—we're going to have a bit of weather presently."

He worked forward to the bridge, as the staccato bugle notes of "Secure!" rang out and the crews knocked off torpedo practice. Jim Sloan, the exec., met him at the gangway, his face full of concern. "Glass has dropped to 28.5, skipper."

"Great cats! The bottom's dropping out of the sky!" groaned the commander. "And Les is up in it somewhere! Have you got everything all secure? The wind ought to hit us any time now."

"Your brother, the aviator, up in it! No!" cried

Sloan sympathetically. "Yes, sir, I've got nearly everything stowed—cleaning up odds and ends now."

The commander looked aft along the reeling decks of the three hundred feet of slender steel warship that was his charge. His torpedo tubes were swung inboard and secured fore and aft; his guns were muffled in their canvas covers, his cutter boats double-lashed, stanchions and rails taken down and stowed; even the bare awning rafters over the quarter-deck had been sent below. The *Nottingham* was ready for the gale.

But he was now more than ever worried over Leslie. The boy had a *flair* for aviation, and he knew all about motors and air waves, and seaplane "dope" in general, and he was supposed to know something of navigation and seamanship; but the latter was but book knowledge read over at the training school, and no doubt a glorious jumble of half-remembered facts in the youngster's mind. In his man's way, the commander loved Leslie, with the rough, domineering tenderness of a fussy and critical elder brother. Since Colonel Bradshaw, C. S. A., had died Elmer had been *in loco parentis* to Leslie. The commander was a typical sea dog; he loved his ship and all on board of her with a man's comradeship, and they occupied most of his thoughts; but his family affections were centered on his mother and Les—that slim young figure in its sprack aviation uniform, with its smooth, resolute, boyish young face, its laughing, teasing

brown eyes, its finely penciled eyebrows, its regular aristocratic features, its air of insolent daring, careless of death and danger. For Les was a man's boy, one that an older man could love for the very qualities that he himself lacked. Supremely confident in himself and his "boat," callous to a thousand dangers that would worry and beset an older man, Les had the youth and the nerve that are required to win a commission as a seaplane flyer.

And every time the commander thought of him, he saw, through him, that pretty little white-haired lady-love who was always dear, jolly, capable "Muz" to them both. Les was the image of his mother. He was her darling, her baby, *the* baby of the family. A scene indelibly stamped in the commander's memory was that final parting on the great white-columned porch of the plantation manor down in South Carolina, when she had kissed them both farewell, and the war had called Elmer to his ship and Les to the training school. She loved Elmer, her first born, as only a mother can love—but she worshipped Les! Elmer had felt, then, more than ever like a father to him when he had stood aside at that war-time separation and she had fondled Les like a baby and had wept over him as if he were still a toddler in skirts.

And that responsibility weighed heavily on him now. The commander glanced to windward where the smooth, mountainous seas swept down on them endlessly out of the inexhaustible northeast. The

slim destroyer bucked and plunged like a race horse, cleaving the sleek hillocks of water with her sharp prow, and rolling incredibly, her crew hanging on like grinning monkeys to stay and stanchion to keep from being pitched bodily overboard. Bradshaw clung to the bridge rail, half determined to go below and see if Les had really gotten away.

Then "Listen!" he exclaimed, hand cupped to ear. "Hear it? Here comes the wind!"

From far down over the western horizon came a low moan from under the characteristic white arch of a hurricane; then the remote, muffled gnashing of angry seas, coming nearer and nearer; then a serried line of tumbling white, stretching under black skies across the horizon from north to south, spread over the sea and rolled swiftly toward them; and then—a foaming front of roaring water swept down upon them, obliterating everything in flying sheets of white spindrift that drove past them in blizzards of pelting sea foam—a Hatteras cyclone of prodigious strength. The *Nottingham* bore northwest, plunging across it, as sheets of spray and rain beat against the chart-house portholes. One by one, driven from the outer bridge, all but the lookouts, who were swathed in glistening oilskins, dashed for its iron door, to be hurled bodily into the room, propelled by sheets of solid water.

The wind gauge jumped to eighty miles an hour, to a hundred, to a hundred and twenty—at one hundred

and fifty its needle finally quivered, as the commander stared unbelievably. The vibration of wind-riven steel hummed and trembled all over the ship, rising to a high-pitched whine that heightened steadily in key. Outside, the wind blew with such force that to make way against it the commander had to drive himself forward with all the strength of heel and foot, aided by the pull of his grip on rail or stanchion. It combed at him as if made of some solid, gluey substance, stopping the breath in his nostrils, beating like a drum in his ears, tearing at cape and greatcoat with fierce invisible fingers.

The two starboard boats stove in and splintered by the smash of boarding seas, went by the side with the first blast of the gale, and their planks and ribs were whisked off to sea without a sound of their destruction audible above the roar of the storm. Iron deck gear, presumably lashed fast, was ripped up and went overboard, noiselessly as on a movie screen, for the crash and grind of fixtures torn adrift made not the slightest impression in the deafening shriek of the cyclone.

The commander, going inside, peered aft through a chart house porthole, to watch eight seamen untying the lashings of a narrow strip of awning that had not yet been secured. The instant it was loose, the wind whipped it out of their hands as if they had been children, and nailed it flat down on the wet topsides, where the strength of four of them together could

not raise so much as one corner of it. They abandoned it, and presently, in a caprice of the gale, it fluttered an instant, was torn loose, and disappeared into the sea to leeward.

"She'll roll over on her back and kick her forehead and heels together, if these seas get any higher!" joked the exec., hanging to a brass engine-room telegraph standard for a brace. "Wind's beginning to whip whole tops off the waves, skipper."

Bradshaw looked out a chart-house porthole, to see a huge comber half a mile long rolling down upon them, the wind curling over its top like a monster whitecap, and hundreds of tons of foaming water swirling down the hillside upon them. The *Nottingham* rose up the slope and buried herself in it. For a time there was nothing but dazzling whiteness scouring by outside. Then they topped the wave crest and wiggled down into the abyss on the other side, everybody careening madly across the chart house as the destroyer skidded down into the hollow. Old Simons, the grizzled quartermaster at the wheel, laughed grimly as he watched the two shivering lookouts cowering in the corners of the bridge outside.

"Ye can warble about the trenches and the cooties and the nights of wind and rain; but us guys is wet inside and outside and sideways from the minute we goes on duty till we hits the beach!" he growled whimsically. "Sure, sir, the only part av me that iver gets dry is me throat, bedad!"

Bradshaw laughed cordially. He loved every man jack on his ship, and so far as he could, he let discipline adjust itself to the ingrained democracy of the Navy. "Sure, Bill," said he, "most of us will be tied up in bowknots—and our in'ards'll be braided—by the time we get ashore! Wow! Look at *that* one!" The whole top of a roller forty feet high was being whipped off by the gale as he spoke. It sleeted over the destroyer, the water rattling against her steel plates like shrapnel bullets. The *Nottingham* staggered under it, shook off the water in sheets from her steel sides and then rose like an elevator up the slope, her stern buried in the foam of her wake.

"A dam' good old packet is the U. S. S. *Prickly Heat*!" drawled the exec. admiringly, watching this performance. "She rides as lively as the ship's gig. Whoops! Grab, boys. Here comes another one!"

The commander, worrying again over Les, picked up the telephone to the wireless room. "Ayres, get Ensign Bradshaw's bearings on the compass receiver," he ordered. He hung it up and grabbed for the brass rail as the destroyer rolled to her beam ends. Presently it buzzed, and he braced heel against foot on the slanting deck as he put the receiver to ear. "Seventy-seven degrees, thirty minutes, eh? . . . What does he say for himself? . . .

"Up nine thousand feet and doesn't know where he is? Well, we'll soon show him!" He shot a glance over at the exec. as he started to hang up the receiver.

"Hold him, Ayres, just a minute," he added through the instrument. Then he took up the parallel rulers and laid them on the chart. As the little black rubber bar reached out across the chart, a look of horror gathered in his eyes. His jaw dropped; his breath choked in his throat; his eyes popped under their bushy brows.

"*He-ell* boys!" he almost screamed, staring at the line, aghast. "Do you know where the Kid *is*?"

The bridge looked up. It was not often that they heard the commander swear. "Hope he hasn't got himself into any trouble," said Sloan concernedly, coming over to the chart frame.

"Trouble!" echoed the commander excitedly. "Here's where he *was*!"—indicating a pin prick on the chart. "And—this bearing puts him—right—square—in the center—of the cyclone!" he groaned, looking at them solemnly. "He must have turned to the right instead of the left when the wind hit him. Take the bridge, Jim. I've got to go below and talk to him."

He groped his way hurriedly through the corridors, and entering the wireless room snatched the receiver from Ayres' hand. "That you, Les?" he called, fumbling with the head piece. "What in the devil did you bear to the right for? Do you know where you *are*!" he thundered.

"I had to, Pa," came Leslie's voice, still using the nickname with which he teased his older brother. "The wind hit me from the southeast; to go to the

left as you said would land me clear out in the Atlantic."

"From the *southeast!*" choked the commander. "My—God!"

"What's the matter, Pa—swearing? You seem all het up!" gibed Leslie.

"Matter, boy—you're *trapped!*" fulminated Bradshaw, glancing at Ayres with tragic eyes. "This damn' thing's a huge funnel, maybe ten miles high, for all we know—and you're inside of it! It can't be over twenty miles wide at the base, since you struck southeast wind on your side of it, and instead of flying out, you went right into it—and now you can't *get* out! I told you you didn't know anything about cyclones! Kid, it must be a regular maelstrom up there."

"It is rather sporty!" came back Leslie, calm and cherubic with the confidence of youth—nothing serious could ever happen to him! "And I'm skied, all right! Below me is a whirling sea of clouds, and all around the horizon is a wall of them, driven along flat by a wind that I can't force the ol' boat through. Been across it already. Easy flying, but some gusty, in here. Can't zoom up over it—pressure's too low. Got top speed on her now, and nine thou' is as high as she'll go."

"How much gas have you got left, Les?" asked the commander shakily, visions of having to face a heart-

broken little mother—without Les—floating through his mind.

"Oh, 'bout four hours!" chuckled Les. "Scared, Pa?"

"Aw, you make me sick!" exploded the older brother. "For Heaven's sake, if you don't value your own life, think of your mother—you'll break her heart! You've got to get out of this, Kid, and I've got to help you—somehow."

"Might drop down through the bank below me," ventured Les. "But what'd the sea be like—eh?"

"I tell you what it would be like!" snarled the commander. "That center circle's just a tumbling mass of chops—seas three times as high as this ship, banging up against each other from every point of the compass. Neither you nor I would live there ten minutes. They'd tear you up like a matchbox."

"Well, I'll *be* there—in four hours!" cut in Leslie. "This kite's coming *down* when the gas gives out—b'lieve me!"

The commander swore savagely. "Yes—dammit; you'll *be* there! And you'll last about as long as a baby in a pack of wolves, unless there's a reception committee waiting for you! This packet's going into that storm center after you—but the point will be for you to find us——"

"Gee! Zowie! My M. G's gumming!" chirped Leslie's fresh young voice, interrupting. "By-by,

P-rrrrrr . . ." And the telephone trailed off into an unintelligible blur, growing fainter and fainter, until no more sound came to the commander's ears.

Bradshaw took off the head piece helplessly, and turned to Ayres. "Trapped, Ayres! Skied!" he quavered, leaning on the sympathy of the electrician as an old man totters to some support. "My brother's got himself into the danger circle of this cyclone! Picture it, Ayres—up in a damn, fool machine that is sure to kill its man sooner or later! And this outside, here"—waving his hand at the roaring spume that beat against the portholes—"all around him!"

"It's turr'ble, sir!" muttered the man sympathetically. "And his telephone's give out on you, sir?"

"Yes; the motor generator's gummed or something. It's out on the airplane wing, you know, where he can't get at it to fix it alone."

"Well, even if he can't send, sir, he can receive. You kin give him orders. Here's two aerograms, sir, from the base."

He passed them to the commander silently.

To Comm'd'r Elmer Bradshaw, U. S. N.,
On board U. S. S. *Nottingham* (re-
layed):

Where is Leslie?

SUSAN PEMBERTON BRADSHAW.

The commander stared at it stupidly. The admiral himself could not have sent a more peremptory message! Evidently the wires were busy back home; and

she, hearing about the cyclone, had telegraphed the commandant, and they had relayed it. He laid down the slip of paper, and leaned back, with his eyes closed, bracing himself, as for the shock of a deluge of icy water. "Yes, mother where is he!" he shivered. "There will be no answer to that one—just yet, Ayres," he said quietly.

He read the next one :

To all Naval Forces on Patrol Evolutions :

Commanders will abandon maneuvers and return to base immediately. Acknowledge.

J. F. HAYFORTH,

Aide to the Commandant, by direction.

Bradshaw hesitated. This was official, and required an immediate answer. If he gave the situation as it was, some capable idiot would be sure to telegraph Mrs. Bradshaw, worrying her into hysterics, and moreover some other donkey in authority would be sure to veto any permission to take the *Nottingham* into the cyclone center, for fourteen officers and eighty-seven men are a big crew to risk for one lost aviator—with practically no chance to find him, even if the destroyer should survive.

The commander began to have such thoughts himself, but he put them away resolutely. "I reckon we'll go it alone," he decided. "Ayres, just answer that one, '*Received*,' and sign it with my name." He stepped to the bridge phone. "Put her *hard a-star board*, Jim!" he ordered as the exec. answered it.

"What!" yelled Sloan. "Why, we'll be out of this in a couple of hours more!"

"I said 'Helm hard a-starboard,' " growled Bradshaw gruffly. "It's for Leslie, Jim."

"I understand you, old man," came back the exec. feelingly. "We're with you—to the limit! Hard a-starboard 'tis!"

The commander could feel the *Nottingham* pitching and reeling, yawing wildly under the pounding seas, as bit by bit the quartermaster nursed her around and she chopped in a wide semicircle across the white mountain ranges. She was an able boat, a comparatively new destroyer, and she took the waves on her port bow with the same life and leap that she had on the starboard, only now they seemed to be getting rougher with every turn of her screws as she headed back across the storm. The chart room looked at the commander affectionately as he entered. Everyone on the ship seemed to understand; not a word was spoken, but they were with him.

An hour passed—an hour of thrashing and plunging that threatened to snap the rivets out of her plates, of screaming wind that thrummed every stay like a harp string and blew the smoke from the funnels flat on the water, of boarding seas that smothered the *Nottingham* in a shroud of white and smashed the two port boats as they had the starboard ones. Then little by little the whip of the gale grew less fierce, and the wind veered and whirled until the funnel smoke

was twisting and spiraling away from the ship in every direction; but the ocean was, if anything, even more appalling in the majesty of its mast-high seas.

Old Simmons shook his head. "Look yon, sir!" he croaked. "She'll never live!"

The horizon seemed to stand up in pointed sierras, with white foaming peaks that met in showers of spray, rising in spouts to the ragged clouds above. Now and then a huge one, seemingly borne up on the shoulders of his fellows, would fall over in avalanches of gnashing white surf foam. It was nineteen feet from the bridge to the water's edge on the *Nottingham*; these fellows would be at least sixty feet high!

"It's the chop—the storm center!" breathed the commander, awe-struck. "We won't live ten minutes out there. All hands keep a sharp lookout on the sky for Les. Howatt"—this to the junior ensign of the watch—"put a couple of our best lookouts to port and starboard on the outer bridge."

The *Nottingham* plowed on. Already the broadside seas were beginning to give way to ugly cross chops that beat and buffeted upon her, smashing down on her bows, punching her in the cutaways forward where the muffled four-inch rifles looked out, slowing down her way and pounding her amidships and astern. Like a thing bewildered, with water pouring in cascades from torpedo guns and quick-firers on deck, she seemed not to know where to turn next. If she started to rise, two waves at once would deluge

down upon her, smothering her under green seas; if she slewed down a hollow, it was to be buried out of sight in it, like some cockleshell canoe under a waterfall. She fought and gasped like a drowning man, staggering slowly ahead, scarce minding her helm.

"Speed's down to four knots," announced young Howatt, come back into the chart house after a tour astern to read the log. Four knots—and the destroyer could do thirty-one, and had sixteen thousand horsepower driving her that very moment! They all looked at the commander anxiously.

"Well—we're here!" he said uneasily. "And it's up to us to spot the boy—I doubt if he could make *us* out, buried as we are in the seas."

"The clouds aren't more than a few hundred feet over our heads," ventured the exec. "When he does come down through them, even if we live,—and the seas don't reach up and get him,—it will be touch and go if he ever finds us."

"Maybe he's already down, and circling about over the seas looking for us," suggested Howatt. "All hands at lookout for us!"

Ten minutes of strained watching passed, while the destroyer wallowed in the chop, and the creak and whine of her frames came up from below in a jangle of complaining sounds—the very soul of the ship cried out! Then the engineer officer came into the chart house, his face grave with foreboding. "We

can't hold the steam, sir," he told the waiting commander. "Too much water's coming down the funnels to hold the fires. They're hissing with quenched coals as it is."

"Can you give us ten minutes more, chief?" asked Bradshaw, his face drawn with anxiety. "We're here—but dashed if I see the Kid anywhere. Hope he hasn't—already——" He gulped and did not finish the sentence.

"Just *about* ten minutes, sir; then we'll have to cut and run for it—or I sha'n't answer for my fires!" declared the engineer officer shortly. "Excuse me, sir, I'll have to go below and keep after 'em."

He departed, and the commander bit his lip, wavering. "Anyone got any ideas?" he implored. "We've got to *make* him see us, somehow. Let's assume that the boy is already cruising around this area looking for us——"

"If he only had his wireless——" began Sloan as spokesman for the group, none of whom seemed able to offer a solution.

Bradshaw waved him silent. "Ayres has been sending right along, telling him we're coming. I've thought of firing a gun—of sending up a rocket—even of firing a timed torpedo to make a spout, a geyser; but they'd all be futile—in this!"

His shipmates stood about him consolingly, thinking hard—and still the minutes passed, with no hail

from the lookouts; and still the ship groaned and labored. She could not stand the buffeting much longer.

"Well?" said Sloan interrogatively, at length. Some one had to make the distasteful move to give it up—and he was next in command.

The commander closed his eyes, his face grim and sorrow-stricken, as the group waited, the quartermaster cocking his ear for the order, "Hard a-port!"

Then, hollowly, as if speaking in a dream, "The Lord is in the tempest! His voice is in the storm! Praised be the name of the Lord!" boomed the commander solemnly . . . "*Start your smoke screen!—watch!—and pray!*" came the order, as from one who heard in a trance.

"The very thing!" shouted the exec., springing to the engine-room speaking tube. "Chief! Oh, chief! Start your smoke screen as quick as you can do it! Gad, fellows, we'll spread a black smudge fifteen miles long that the boy can't help but see! And we'll be at the upper end of it, all right! Skipper, you're sure boss, when it comes to a pinch hit!"

Presently dense billows of black smoke were rolling out from the four funnels of the destroyer, that thick crude-oil smudge that has screened many a battle fleet in an impenetrable veil. The wind swept it in great clouds across the wave tops, in dense, heavy, solid curls from the funnel tops—a mark that could be seen by an aviator for miles. Hope began to dawn

on the faces in the chart house. The commander dashed out to join the lookouts on the outer bridge. He could hardly stand up here, and the white spray sleeted over him as he pulled the hood of his great-coat up over his head and held it there with both hands. Five minutes passed, then ten, and hope began to wane, and his heart sank again, for it would not be much longer before the destroyer would have to put back.

Then the port lookout crawled over and touched him on the shoulder. "Plane ho!" he shouted in the commander's ear. "See it, sir?"

"No—I don't—where is he?" demanded Bradshaw eagerly. He followed the lookout's finger, but could see nothing. "Yonder, sir," grinned the starboard lookout, coming over to join them and pointing with a horny finger that jutted out from a flapping yellow sleeve.

"Damn my eyes, anyhow!" exploded the commander wrathfully. "I'd give a lot to own as good ones as you boys have! There—I see him!"

Low over the horizon skimmed a tiny black speck. It was some time before he could make out the faint horizontal lines above it that proclaimed it an airplane, but it was coming on fast, and soon it soared overhead, while Bradshaw barked out orders for hand lines. Men staggered out on deck, facing the swirling seas with coiled lines in their hands, while the plane banked and circled, and finally shot down and

plunged into the breast of a great, sloping wall of water. The commander held his breath as its long wings turned over and over, and a rabble of foam raced down the wave slope upon it. Presently, out of the tangle of sea foam and plane 'gear, he saw a human figure, its arms striking out valiantly over the rim of a white ring buoy. The *Nottingham* veered over doggedly toward it, as Simmons spun the wheel; and she yawed majestically, high in the air, as a dozen life lines shot out from her sides. The commander saw Leslie grab one of them and make it fast around the ring buoy, and then he disappeared in spouts of spray that leaped out from the destroyer's sides. But three stout tars were hauling away on the line, and with the next roll they had him aboard and hurried him below into the wardroom.

The commander dashed into the chart house. "Hard a-port, quartermaster!" he ordered, his eyes flashing with joy. "Jim, you take her out of this—see you later!" And he hurried down the ladder and raced aft along the corridors to the wardroom. Leslie was waiting for him, very wet, very cheerful, entirely at home already. "Some one gimme a butt—I'm half dead for a smoke!" he was saying to the eager, questioning watch officers as the commander entered.

"Hello, Pa!" he grinned as Elmer rushed forward. "Who thought of the smoke screen? That was a life-saver, men!"

"Your *mother*, son!" choked the commander as he wrung the youth's hand.

"Mother! Is she in on this too?" laughed Leslie wonderingly as he blew smoke through his nostrils. "Where'd she get into the sketch?"

"I don't know, son—but you can thank her for your life, and not for the first time, either!" retorted Elmer seriously. "You know, I don't believe in telepathy and all that rot—but this I *do* know: We were at our wits' end to know what to do, and were about to give you up, when I closed my eyes—and I saw *her*, Kid! She was on her knees, praying for you, praying in an agony, as Jacob wrestled with God in the dim tract of Penue! . . . Boy, I wish you could have seen her face! And then, son, plain as I say them now, something whispered into my mind these words—I *heard* them, son: '*Start your smoke screen—watch—and pray!*'

"That's all I know."

There was a silence as Leslie listened with downcast eyes, staring unseeingly. Then he lifted his head and looked the commander in the eye. "I believe you, sir!" he said very respectfully, and he stretched forth his hand, a new, an older look in his face.

The commander took it, and slapped him on the back, his eyes sparkling. "Gad, boy, but I'm glad to see that! Some day you'll realize how much you mean to those who love you. Get on some dry clothes and come up to the chart house; I'm going to wire mother you're safe!"

THE SALUTE

ADMIRAL ROCKWOOD, commandant of the navy yard, pressed button No. 10 on the edge of his broad desk and summoned his orderly. "Give my compliments to Lieutenant Haworth, and ask him to step in," he ordered.

Jack Haworth, lieutenant senior grade, U. S. N., retired, opened the door and stood at salute. The admiral arose and shook hands warmly with his veteran aide. A splendid figure of a man, Jack Haworth, big and portly in his service blouse, his florid, weather-beaten tan skin showing far up under the roots of his scanty gray hair, his heavy spade beard, of formal cut, accentuating the firm, dogged lines of his jaw. Jack's fine brown eyes beamed as he accepted official papers from the admiral's hand, and rolled out a rich, "Good morning to you, sir!" in his heavy bass voice.

"This will be your last day with me, old barnacle," the admiral announced with affectionate regret in his tones. "Here are your orders, detaching you. To duty on secret service, to Spain. The Detail Office phoned me they had selected you several days ago."

Jack bellowed joyously as he took the orders. "Queer things going on in Spain!" he grunted cheer-

fully. "Too many Hun subs and raiders getting out of her ports right now. I see I am to take over three secret-service men who can speak Spanish."

"Right! I've arranged for them; you're to sail on the *Santa Isabel* Saturday. By the way, your cousin, Sam Haworth, is reporting here to-day; he's to be gunnery officer on the repair ship *Pluto*, and I've given orders for her to keep in touch with the *Isabel* on the way over—until you have to cut loose and run for Corunna. You'll both go over on the Fortieth Parallel, the old Gibraltar route."

Jack took a chair and handed over his orders. The admiral endorsed them. Then, pressing a button, he summoned a junior officer, Jack's relief, the new aide. "Forsyth, have my orderly take these up to the pay office to open the lieutenant's new account. . . . So you're going on secret duty to Spain, eh?—always in line for dangerous service, you old gamecock!" he exclaimed enviously.

Jack rested his Civil War sword between his knees and grinned at the admiral genially as he nodded assent. It was a heavier and more businesslike weapon than the regulation bodkin of to-day, and he always wore it instead of a present-day sword when on ceremonial occasions—also kept it keen and sharp, for real use if need be. The two old comrades fell to chatting of Civil and Spanish War reminiscences over a couple of strong weeds that the admiral dug up out of a box in his desk.

Presently the new aide came in. "Lieutenant Samuel Haworth, sir!" he announced, saluting.

"Very good; show him in. Here comes Sammy, Jack."

Sam Haworth, junior lieutenant, fleet reserve, stepped in and saluted stiffly to both of them. Long and tall, the ordnance officer looked very like a twelve-inch, Mark IX gun himself. His keen gray eyes bored at one over lower eyelids that arched upwards, giving them a particularly hostile and glittering aspect. He shook hands grimly with the admiral and then slapped Jack heartily on the back, his eyes flashing at him like dancing diamond points.

"To the repair ship *Pluto*!" mused the admiral, reading his orders. "You're to be gunnery officer aboard of her, I hear."

"Yes, sir. I hope you've had her camouflaged, sir: she's got a battery abroad of her that can blow some of these damned Hun raiders out of water if you only give it a chance, sir."

"She *is* camouflaged," smiled the admiral affably, "take a look at her." He indicated the No. 3 dock out of the office window, where the *Pluto* could be seen, painted like Jezebel of Babylon, a scandal for all the high seas. Splashes of black and sky blue slashed her sides and slapped up on her funnels; curves of black, on a sea-green background, turned her bow into a wave form and set her visible stern forty feet forward of

the true position of her rudder—an abortion, a sea monster, no less!

“Even a fleet-reserve man,” jeered Lieutenant Jack, “ought to be ashamed to put to sea in such a looking craft! She isn’t honest—she isn’t even decent—she’s a brazen hussy, fit only for a ‘poached egg’ to command!”

“I had to get special orders to paint her out of war gray,” broke in the admiral. “But you’re going over convoyed only by that new destroyer, the *Soley*, and will join the Grand Fleet alone, under sealed orders.”

“I like her!” grinned the gunnery officer. “To look at her, now, you wouldn’t suspect she had a tooth in her head! Problem: find the twenty five-inch rifles that I know she mounts!”

The painters had done a fine job. The *Pluto’s* broadside of ten five-inch rapid-firers had completely disappeared. The guns themselves were so splotched and camouflaged that they simply melted into the side of the ship, and at two miles she would look for all the world like some neutral grain boat—when she looked like a boat at all!

“Curious about you two,” observed the admiral banteringly. “You, Jack, ought to be an admiral yourself by this time if some fool hadn’t come along and invented that worsted yarn color test. You can tell a port from a starboard light as far as you—or I, either—can see it, but you can’t tell red from green

worsted! Color-blind! Pish! What a thing to retire a capable officer from active duty on!"

"No wonder Jack's pet abomination is worsted in any form!" broke in Sam laughingly. "They say that the mere sight of a sweater on a gob drives him into a notable rage. And here he is, back in his third war, still a senior lieutenant!"

"And you, too, Sam," continued the admiral, "if you'd stayed in the service, instead of going into civil life as manager of the Nazareth Ordnance Works, you'd have been a captain by now, instead of junior lieutenant in the fleet reserve. It's a pity the way you retired men are treated! Jimmy Haworth, the only regular left in your family, ranks you both now—yet he's the kid of your tribe, I understand."

"Some kid!" gurgled Jack. "Has won ten numbers in the torpedo-boat service already. Hope he gets this *Soley* boat which is going to convoy you, Sam."

"Might!" ventured Sam succinctly. "The Detail Office is just likely to run its finger down the column of H's and order all three of us to something in one fell swoop," he argued. "Jimmy's looking for another boat now, since that last Hun sub blew off his bows; —I know that much."

The talk ran on, while the admiral signed official papers, now and then tossing over a quizzical observation at the two Haworths.

After a time, the aide entered again and stood at salute. The admiral turned and acknowledged it.

"Lieutenant Commander James Haworth, sir!" he announced imperturbably.

A guffaw of laughter went up. "Raining Haworths, these days!" chortled the admiral. "How in the world did the old dear of a bureau ever contrive it?"

The door opened, and Lieutenant Commander Jimmy Haworth stepped in. The two older Haworths stood rigidly at salute, an ironical, quizzical smile on their faces. "Oh, I say! It isn't fair for you two to have to do that!" protested Jimmy with flushed face as he turned from greeting the admiral. "You, Uncle Jack, veteran of three wars, and you, Cousin Sam, veteran of two and hero of Siboney besides—it isn't right, is it, admiral?" he appealed, turning to the commandant.

"Return salute, sir!" ordered the admiral sardonically, "It's reg.!"

Jimmy's white-gloved right hand went to his visor, and instantly the two veterans dropped theirs. Then everyone laughed.

Jimmy flushed. "I rank you both, and yet you are veterans of two and even three wars, while I am veteran of none, unless what little I have done in this one counts." (That "little" was merely sinking two Hun submarines already, and getting his bows blown off by a third, which left him shipless for the nonce!)

"Admiral, you know that Uncle Jack ought to be

an admiral himself now, by rights, and Sam a captain: it makes me feel like a blooming bilger to have them salute an insignificant, untried kid like me, sir!"

The admiral pointed to the blue-and-gold and blue-and-red service bar on Sam Haworth's blouse, his Spanish War and Sampson Medal ribbons; and then to the Civil and Spanish War service bars pinned across Lieutenant Jack's gorilla chest. "Those bars are worth all the silver stars and gold leaves that you and I will ever wear, youngster. Every Navy man who sees them understands. It's an honor to receive a salute from them; and, son, what is more, it's up to you to win the right to make them take a salute in kind."

Jimmy smiled broadly under his tan, and a guileful look came into his eyes. "Admiral I'll bet you an Airedale pup, sir, against a box of your justly famous cigars, that I *do* win it and before this war is out, sir!"

Now, an Airedale pup is the true and short way straight to the admiral's heart, as anyone who knows him will tell you. "I'll take that bet, youngster!" beamed the white-haired old sea dog. "Let's see your orders."

He opened them as he spoke. "To command the *Soley*—what'd I tell you, men!" barked the admiral amid the gust of merriment that went up. "Yon she is, over in Basin No. 2, a fine new destroyer, just over from the Squantum yard. There's your chance,

youngster; put it all over your esteemed relatives—or I'll never bet another box of cigars on you again! Have a chair!" he broke off abruptly.

They seated themselves, and for some moments the admiral regarded the three Haworths in quizzical silence. Then, "Bear, Tiger, and Wolf!" he gibed, poking a finger in turn at the burly, hairy figure of Jack; the long, muscular frame and savage eyes of Sam; and the keen, aggressive, capable face of Jimmy. "Damned if you three aren't the human counterparts of those identical amiable animals!"

The three Haworths grinned cheerfully, and Jimmy, as the youngest, rose to pay his respects and depart. "Some game chicken, Jack!" approved the admiral admiringly as Jimmy's short, thickset figure disappeared through the office door, its rolling sea gait using up nearly the whole door for gangway. Jack wagged a cheroot luxuriantly under his tongue. "You'll never win an Airedale out of that boy, admiral. But he'll have to go some before we let him get his box of cigars, too, eh, Sam?"

"Aye, aye," nodded Sam soberly, his gaze still following Jimmy down the corridor which led from the commandant's office. "The service demands the real stuff of its youngsters!"

That week in May, '17, Hampton Roads, which sees and has seen many notable naval spectacles, observed three perfectly commonplace events: the pas-

sage of one Spanish liner outward bound for Corunna; the unnoticed departure of a bedecked and bedizened object that might be a wave and again might not, so odd did it look against a sky line; and, still more unnoticed, with only her screened speed lights showing, a long, low, black-gray serpent that slipped and slithered over the waves, rolling incredibly, casting smoke from her four funnels as a sower sows grain, and swiftly disappearing into the gray wastes of the Atlantic before one had really gotten the binoculars trained on her. And so passed the three Haworths out to sea.

With Sam's captain as senior officer present, the two naval vessels and their merchant consort rolled and dipped across the far-flung belt of the Fortieth Parallel. Sometimes the *Isabel* was far down to the south, with only the tops of her masts visible above the horizon; sometimes her wireless alone told of her whereabouts, a few inches, as distances are measured on navigator's charts, over the sea rim which bounds one's visible world. But, taking her by and large, the *Pluto* managed to keep in handy distance of her, until the point of departure was reached and the three ships were to go their several ways; the *Isabel* to Spain, Jimmy to his patrol station, and the *Pluto* to rejoin the Grand Fleet.

As for Jimmy the Wolf, throughout the trip he was all over the ocean, now dashing off to investigate a picked-up wireless; now running over to the *Isabel*

with code aerograms for Jack, now returning to tow humbly astern of the *Pluto*, while a snaky hose, strung on a wire rope towing line, fed him crude oil to replenish his fuel tanks.

Finally, somewhere off the coast of Spain, the family party separated, and, signaling Jack "Good luck!" by wireless, they dropped the *Isabel* to the south. Shortly thereafter, Jimmy ran up his "Duty completed" pennant and sped away to his patrol station in the Bay of Biscay to the east.

Just why an interned, third-class protected German cruiser should be allowed to victual and escape from a neutral port is one of those after-the-war questions that do not greatly concern this narrative, but the fact is that, four hours after the *Santa Isabel* started for her lonely run across the stretch of ocean to Corunna, she made out the raking bows and slanting masts of a vessel that could be none other than a man-o'-war. Out on the high seas there was no possible chance of escape, no matter what the nationality of the stranger might be, and so the *Isabel* wirelessly the *Pluto* her discovery and held on her course.

Presently the man-o'-war flew the two signal flags, V-G: "What ship are you?" and in response the *Isabel* flew her number. The warship waited until the two were but a mile apart, when she broke out the German naval ensign and fired a gun across the *Isabel's* bows. All of which Lieutenant Jack Haworth and his three secret-service men reported to the *Pluto* in urgent

S O S calls. It would not do for them to be taken!

The next signal was A-B, "Abandon ship as fast as possible," and in a quarter of an hour's time that steamer load of men, women, and children found themselves adrift on the huge seas in the ship's boats, with what water and provisions could be hastily assembled. Cursing, they started rowing the two-hundred-mile stretch to the shores of Portugal. Jack Haworth, as a naval officer, was put in charge of the fifth boat, there being but four of the ship's watch officers available for boat command. Before their eyes the good old *Isabel* was set on fire and sunk by gunfire. A pathetic spectacle, one of which there can be no conception except by those who have seen a good ship done to death, and all that product of human skill and energy wantonly destroyed by human hate and barbarism. The infinite grace and sweetness of a ship, the beautiful embodiment that she is of human triumph over the forces of wind and wave, all that goes to make a ship feminine in the eyes of mankind: to see this deliberately smashed by spiteful gunfire, torn to pieces and sunk beneath the waters—the veritable odium of woman murder lies in the tragedy.

And then, alone, on the endlessly heaving waters, with nought but human muscles and ash oars to fight the infernal seas rolling out of the Bay of Biscay; with the boats crowded with half-clad, shivering, hungry women and children; to row on day after day, with scant rations and less water—this was the sum of

human suffering to which those two signal flags, the blue-and-white and the red burgees, condemned the *Isabel's* people. And, just to help them along, the Hun sent a few playful shells scudding amongst them. Then, having won her first victory over an unarmed and defenseless merchantman, the brave sailors of the kaiser bore jauntily to the northeast, passing them at full speed with band playing, looking for another victim.

Jack Haworth found that his boat contained mostly pirates. Seamen of the crew, of every nationality—squareheads, bluenoses, lime-juicers, swarthy Barcelonians, hardy Portuguese—made up his personnel. Most of them were armed with knives, pistols, here and there a cutlass; as Jack drew his Civil War sword and examined its keen, heavy blade, he conceived that rarely had he commanded a more adventuresome lot of salt herrings.

As the other boats gradually drew off to the eastward, the dark suspicion that the raider had gone east for the sole purpose of waylaying the *Isabel's* boats and following with them the Hun custom of "*spurlos versenkt*," made him decide to turn to the north. According to the laws of screw propulsion, the *Pluto* should not be more than thirty miles to the north of them by now, nor more than a few hours, steaming behind the *Isabel*. To try to pick her up seemed safer than to risk the tender mercies of a Hun convoy, with a one-pounder shell for his ultimate fate!

And so, signaling the other boats his decision and advising them to follow at a safe distance, they rowed with double-banked oars to the north.

Having looked his last on the *Isabel* disappearing over the horizon to the southward, Lieutenant (j. g.) Sam Haworth, standing beside the captain on the *Pluto's* bridge, whiled away the time before muster with idle glances out over the empty waste of tumbling, blue-black seas. They were in the roaring forties, with the trade winds of the whole west Atlantic piling the white plumes over the sparkling, deep blue waves. Splotches of gulfweed streamed past; now and then a flock of flying fish would burst out of a wave side and skim far over the rollers, their white bodies flashing under the sunny southern skies. It was a day to gladden the heart of any sailorman, with the sea a smother of sparkling blue and white hillocks, and the old *Pluto* standing now on her head, now on her tail, lying down first on one side and then on the other with even regularity.

Out from the bugler's station under the bridge floated the rapid staccato notes of First Call. The ship's company ran to their formations on the double, and presently stood in rigid lines, division by division, each with its officer in front, reporting muster to the executive officer. It was a well-drilled lot. The repair ship carried lathes, planers, drill presses, shapers,

and a whole foundry and cupola in her 'tween decks, and most of her people were machinists, but that had not prevented the gunnery officer from making fighting men of them, too. The rigid lines stood silent at attention, while the captain and his executive officer passed slowly up and down the line, subjecting each tar to the minutest scrutiny.

Followed the long shrill of the bosun's pipe and the hoarse hail of his mates, "T-u-r-r-n to!" The formations broke ranks at sharp command, and then came the bugle call that the crew loved best, "Gun Drill!" Sam Haworth had mustered every machinist of the lot into his gun crews during the trip over, and by now had a full complement for each battery, drilled to the minute and able to hit a floating potato barrel as far as it could be seen over the waves. Each five-inch rifle had its pointer, its trainer, its sight setter, its plugman, two shellmen and three powdermen: nine men to the gun, one hundred and eighty men to her twenty-gun main battery, and that more than half of these were machinists, used to the fine, exact work of machine-shop practice, was no small asset in their adaptability as gunners.

At the command, "Stations!" each man took his allotted position around the guns, the pointers at the elevating wheels, the trainers at the training gear so as to swing the gun from side to side, the sight setters at their azimuth bars, plugmen at the breech-operating

mecnanism, and shellmen and powdermen on each side to pass the great brass cartridges and slam them into the breech.

A barrel was hove adrift, and the *Pluto* made a big half circle to bring her starboard battery to bear on it. Using subcaliber tubes, the whole battery could play on it until demolished, the tiny white splashes of the bullets correcting the range and gun pointing so long as the mark could be seen.

In the midst of which—up on the bridge came running the messenger from the wireless officer! The captain gave the yellow slip one glance, and then stepped quickly to the engine-room telephone. "Eighteen knots! Must have it!" he bellowed. "Music!" he ordered the executive. "Sound quarters! The *Isabel's* being attacked!"

Immediately the bugle sounded, "Retreat from Drill!" followed by the rollicking notes of general quarters. Under their feet the *Pluto* was already churning and throbbing from the pulsations of speeding engines, while the quartermaster turned her in a vast circle to the southward. At the bugle call the ship became a tumbling mass of white-forked human beings, each man running to his station on the double-quick. Full gun crews fell in beside their pieces, double watches tumbled below to the engine room, fire-hose lines were run out and tested, water-tight doors secured: a *melée* of orderly activity!

The still sterner call, "Clear ship for action!" rang

out. Down came the ventilator cowl, searchlights were dismantled and sent below, lifeboats set adrift, ammunition passed to the guns and the main battery loaded with real shells, while the long range finder on the hurricane deck swung slowly on its pivot as a keenly excited young gunner's mate peered into it, calling test ranges into the fire-control telephone transmitter. The old *Pluto* was ready! aye, ready-o!

An hour of feverish racing southward passed. The S O S. calls from the *Isabel* had ominously ceased, while rolling gunfire came muffled over the sea from the south. "Would the old hooker *never* get there!" stamped Sam Haworth, thinking of Jack. Then a harsh hail from the lookout cage, "Sail ho! Two points off starboard bow!"

A smoke on the horizon! Slowly the raider rose out of the sea, bows on. He appeared, as yet, nought but a blob of gray under a pall of black smoke, but the range finder already had him at nine thousand yards. He evidently wanted that camouflaged *Pluto*, if that black smoke pouring from his funnels meant anything! At five thousand yards he sheered broadside to and flew V-G—"What ship are you?" from his signal yard.

The *Pluto* said nothing, but Sam Haworth from his fire-control station amidships pressed the key of his salvo-latch electric circuit to make sure that all his guns were properly connected in. Salvo firing was the one lesson that he had more than drilled into

those machinists above all others—to keep the whole broadside trained rigidly on the mark, while a single key under his thumb would fire them all off at regular intervals.

Like an overconfident puppy prancing up to a coiled rattler, the Hun raider bore down upon them. Three thousand yards! She broached to, broke out the German ensign, fired a gun across the *Pluto's* bows, and ran up those two hateful little signal flags, "Abandon ship!"

Sam Haworth smiled grimly and glanced up at the captain on the bridge. Every gun in his starboard battery was trained dead on her, and the muttered hails from the swinging range finder were being passed to his sight setters. Every trainer and pointer—plain American machinists, if you please!—had his eye glued to his telescope, with the cross hairs constantly on vital points of the enemy, while the slowly revolving gear wheels turned under their careful hands. No defenseless merchantman was this, frantically sending out S O S. over the empty ocean, but a United States auxiliary cruiser whose stern order to Jimmy Haworth's patrol destroyer to report for immediate duty had already flashed out from her wireless masts. But a third-class protected German cruiser against a U. S. converted repair ship—it was at best an unequal fight! One lucky shot, and the good old *Pluto* would be done for!

Would the captain *never* give the order to fire?

"The nerve of him!" chuckled that worthy. "They're putting over a launch; not even going to waste a torpedo on us. A plain bomb in our hold is good enough for a poor merchantman like us!"

"It's a shame to take the money, sir!" gritted Sam, "Say when, captain!"

"Might as well get the launch, too," called down the skipper—"no, they've spotted our guns! See her people running to quarters!" he called from under his binoculars. "Hand it to her, Sam!"

Haworth gave a last look along his gun decks and pressed the salvo key viciously. The *Pluto* jumped and shivered under the recoil, and her sides became a roaring mass of brown smoke, split by the red flashes from the guns. Far off on the horizon a long line of tall, white shell spouts rose out behind the German, while masts and gear tumbled about her decks and red bursts of flame told where shells had struck home. Only a few of her secondary guns replied, and their screaming messengers of death went wild over the *Pluto's* rigging. At the hail, "Bore clear!" Sam pressed the key, and again a salvo thundered forth from the *Pluto's* sides. The execution was frightful. Great gobs of black smoke arose around the raider's superstructure, destruction showed in every line of her.

But the German's main battery was now getting to work. It takes time to break out and serve heavy eight-inch ammunition, but already they could see the

long, eight-inch bow and stern rifles that she mounted swinging behind their gun shields. Through the binoculars their threatening muzzles already stared at them. Presently they would fire——

"For God's sake concentrate on that forward eight-inch rifle, Sam!" shouted the captain down from the bridge. "One punch from her and we are gone!"

Sam passed the hail, and the next salvo saw a flock of five-inchers pounding the gun shield and ripping up everything portable in its vicinity. No answering puff came from that cannon, but the stern gun boomed and its shell tore through the *Pluto's* side—just where the camouflage said her stern ought to be! It did no particular damage, merely cut off six deck stanchions like a bar shear and smashed up a perfectly good planer into an unrecognizable mass of cast-iron fragments!

Sam set his teeth. "We'll attend to you presently," he gritted. "One more salvo at that forward piece ought to finish it," pressing the key again as he spoke.

At the third belch of flame from the German's after gun, her eight-inch shell came roaring, fair and true, right at the *Pluto*. It was a sure hit, Sam instinctively felt, and at the stunning, blinding crash of it, which knocked him bleeding against the superstructure, he picked himself up to find, on rubbing his eyes clear of the acrid smoke, the whole bridge gone—swept clean, captain, executive officer, quartermaster, and steering wheel utterly obliterated! A stunning blow, cruel beyond measure, a loss of good shipmates that made

Sam's heart ache and a lump to rise in his throat, but there was no time now in the heat of battle to give them so much as a thought. The command of the ship now devolved on him, and, shouting an order for general battery firing, he ran aft to take charge of the emergency steering wheel. At all costs he must keep her broadside to, for, once bows on, his broadside battery would be unable to train.

A couple of quartermaster's mates had already beaten him to the gear and had cast off the canvas covers over the great hand wheels, while the repair crew hurriedly unshackled the steam-steering engine. Exposed on a high grating, six of the deck crew manned the wheels, while already the whining zip and spatter of small arms bullets from the enemy's snipers clipped about the quarter-deck.

"Bless 'em! Dod-gast 'em!" gleefully howled Sam, dancing about in the rain of bullets, his binoculars crammed into his eyes. "They've *got* that infernal after eight-inch!" A flock of shells had buried it in clouds of smoke, to the rolling thunder of his own guns below, for the machinists, left to their own devices, had turned on it with one accord. There was a lull from the German. Not a gun on her was firing. Sam scanned the northern horizon anxiously. At the rate his boys were pounding away at her, and with the aid of the patrol destroyer, they still had a chance!

A salvo from the enemy's 4.7-inch broadside guns cut loose. They had gotten up their rapid-fire ammu-

dition at length. An ominous cessation of his own engine told him that one of the Hun A. P.'s had got home, and at once the *Pluto* began to roll unbelievably, yawing about the seas like a wild thing. His gunfire dropped to steady crashes on the downward roll of the ship, while inexorably the *Pluto* began to swing, bows on, as the wind carried her head around.

Sam bit his lip and cursed. "Oh, for just one pivot gun on this old packet!" he growled. "Here's where we get raked, good and proper!"

An oiler from the engine room came running up. "Solid shot through the intermediate eccentric gear, sir!" he announced. "Chief says he'll have her disconnected and will run on high and low in about half an hour, sir," he saluted.

"Very good. Tell him he can't do it too quick! Meanwhile tell him we'll try to blanket their broadside," barked Sam, fairly shoving the man for'd.

A messenger touched him on the arm. "Destroyer, sir, two points abaft port beam!"

Sam heaved a sigh of relief. "All hands, man headsails!" he shouted.

The German turned to face the new menace, while Sam put every available man and deck winch at breaking out the storm trysails, so as to get steerage way on his ship again. Up out of the north came the destroyer, surely an unequal antagonist to a third-class protected cruiser, so little she looked, a long black saurian, now in sight, now buried behind the waves,

but coming, always coming, her four gray runnels fairly ripping themselves away from their black smoke, so heavily did she roll. The Hun raider yawned nervously, firing first one broadside, then the other at her, the white shell spouts rising like sea geysers all around her. Not a further shot did she waste on the *Pluto*. This destroyer was altogether too fatal a menace.

"I'll court-martial and shoot that young Jimmy scoundrel if he dares back out!" declared Sam, his eyes glittering under the visored cap as he watched the steadily narrowing space between the two.

But the destroyer came straight on. Already her own fourteen-pounders were barking defiance—David racing to meet Goliath—but not yet was the fatal stone in the sling loosed!

Again Sam strained his glasses on the enemy to watch his own shell fire. "Bless 'em! Bless 'em! Dear mechanical kids, *who* told you to concentrate on his stern!" he chortled. "Those infernal machinists are damned geniuses, I tell you!" he yelled at the highly appreciative quartermasters at the steering wheels. "If they shoot away his steering gear in time we've *got* her!"

A salvo of 4.7-inch shells burst over the destroyer. A huge cloud of black crude-oil smoke arose from her, but still she kept on. She seemed less buoyant now, though, and was evidently filling fast, but indomitably she bore on. Suddenly—— "The torpedo!

The torpedo!" yelled a keen-sighted quartermaster at the wheel. It shot from her forward-deck gun, it leaped for the waves, it shot across the back of a huge roller and plunged through another unswervingly for the mark! A second and a third torpedo followed it, and then the destroyer, her work done, settled by the head, to be seen no more.

A vast pyramid of black smoke, arising like a rolling cloud from an oil fire, enveloped the Hun cruiser. Like a shot alligator she reared her bow high in the air. Her people tumbled at random from deck and superstructure out into the sea. Men worked frantically at life rafts high up among her ventilator cowls. A rush forward of wild, terrified human beings—and in three minutes more her steel ram pointed to the skies and slowly she sank from sight.

Sam felt a surge of pity for both antagonists, but his glasses soon told him that one set of survivors were still devils, for presently a life raft, bearing a knot of officers and four men rowing, set out for where a few heads from the destroyer's crew were still bobbing in the waves. It would seem that, at a time like this, sailormen would forget animosities and devote themselves to saving lives from their common enemy, the sea, but the fiendish purpose of those on the raft was only too evident. As the *Pluto* still obstinately refused to swing, Sam snatched a rifle from a gun rack, and, calling a handful of men, raced forward to the forecastle.

When he got up in the eyes of her, a strange sight

met his gaze. The Huns were already devilishly sabering the swimming survivors of the destroyer, but, rowing up from the southeast, with full banks of oars, Sam's astonished eyes made out a lone gray cutter. That she might be a survivor from the lost *Isabel*, he scarce dared hope, but a burly figure in the bows brandishing a shining sword reminded him irresistibly of Jack Haworth. The raft left off its murderous occupation and turned to meet the newcomer. Sam and his men opened fire in the few minutes that were still left before they came together, and then withheld their bullets, to watch a sea fight as savage as any between men since the ancient Romans met to battle the Carthaginians with short swords on the high seas.

The Hun commander was evidently a skillful broadswordsmen, but he was no match for that flaming falchion that cut, thrust, and parried him in the hands of the burly officer in the cutter's bow. His sword glittered and flashed in the sunlight, and at each rise on the waves which brought them into sight, the two were still at it. Then the German, the last survivor on his raft, fell, pierced through the throat by a frightful lunge, and a few minutes later the cutter turned and headed for the *Pluto*.

"Man the accommodation-ladder falls!" shouted Sam to his midshipman deck officer, the last thing in gold braid that still survived on his ship. "Music! Side boys! I'm going to give this fellow an admiral's honors when he comes aboard!"

Slowly the cutter drew near. Back in her stern

sheets a group of men could be made out, bending over a still, postrate form in blue. A glint of gold on his cuff told that it was an officer—perhaps a sole survivor from the intrepid, self-sacrificing destroyer.

“Boat ahoy!” hailed a sentry on the *Pluto*.

“Aye, aye!” answered some one on the cutter. “‘Commissioned naval officer below rank of captain’” muttered Sam Haworth to himself perplexedly. “It must be Jack, then; and we are within a few miles of where the *Isabel* went down.”

“Way ’nough!”

She tossed oars, and the burly officer in the bow, bandaged about the head with a bloody handkerchief and with two broad blood-stained gold stripes of a senior lieutenant on his sleeve, stepped from the cutter and came running up the accommodation ladder.

“Hello, Sam!” he greeted. His tone was melancholy, not a trace of joy shone in his face. Then, hearing the bosun’s pipe and noticing the side boys, “Not for me, old man, I beg!” he added hastily. “For the Kid, below in the cutter, if you wish—dead, on the field of honor.”

“It is Jimmy, then?” asked Sam, who was still hoping against hope.

“Yes; the Kid—our Kid, our Jimmy.” choked Jack Haworth. “I recaptured him off that infernal raft.”

“Jimmy!” echoed Sam tragically, “God in heaven! What will his mother say to us!”

Slowly, carefully, the cutter’s crew bore the still

figure up the ladder. The three gold bars of a lieutenant commander shone from a pathetically limp, dangling arm. Sam waved his hand in silence. The bosun piped, the side boys stood at attention, the drums beat a ruffle—all the honors of a rear admiral were his that could hear them not, while the two older Hawthorns stood at rigid salute, the salt tears coursing unbidden down their weather-beaten cheeks.

The bearers laid him tenderly out on a stretcher and stood aside. Then the surgeon stepped forward and bent over. He alone, in the presence of Death, had the right of way. Carefully he undid the blue blouse, and for a long time lay with his ear on Jimmy Hawthorn's breast. Then he looked up, and a beatific smile shone on the two sorrow-stricken lieutenants.

"He's not dead!" he announced. "Just water-logged and wounded—but his heart's going yet! Take him down to the sick bay, quick!"

Then it was that, all discipline cast aside, the Bear and the Tiger hugged each other before the whole crew and danced about the deck in a paroxysm of joy. Man, dear, but the Wolf had earned that admiral's salute, though!

That night the *Pluto* limped along Franceward under reduced speed. The chief had got her going again on high and low, after he had cleared away the wreckage of his intermediate, and the wounded were all doing nicely below. Sam and Jack sat on

the quarter-deck in steamer chairs, with Jimmy propped up in his bandages between them.

"Nice fight, Sam!" ejaculated the Bear, rolling a weed luxuriously under his tongue.

The Wolf smiled wanly—"S-some salute!" he laughed. "But I sank the Hun, all righty!"

The Tiger said nothing, but his savage eyes glared balefully over the dark, racing waters.

HIS BIT

THE dreadnought *Alaska* thundered out the last salvo of the practice cruise. The great ship rocked with the recoil of it, and a mountain of black smoke, split with long red flashes from her fourteen-inch turret guns, rolled from her sides. Far out on the horizon a flock of tall, white shell spouts rose out of the blue sea, and then the last of the fleet's targets crumpled up in a geyser of sea foam. Young Midshipman Wright, in charge of the for'd upper turret, let out a *Wow!* of joy. "That gets *us* the E, I reckon!" he crowed as the plugman threw on the compressed-air blast which drove out the inflammable gases from the gun bores.

Chief Gunner's Mate Nolan looked up from the gun pointer's telescope. "Another direct hit, sir—flagship indeed, bedad, as well as in name!" Nolan was the "us" who had made the hit and won the E for *Alaska*.

It was back in the top-notch efficiency days of 1912 that the Atlantic Fleet made its record-breaking, battle-practice cruise, and the *Alaska* proved herself not only the bearer of the admiral's flag but the peer also of every other dreadnought in the squadron. The *California* had run her a close second; without Nolan's

final smash, in which all three guns of the for'd lower turret had knocked out a 15 between them, the white E would have gone on *her* turrets instead of the *Alaska's*. It was the greatest day of Nolan's life, that bright morning in May, for after "Secure!" had been sounded, the secretary of the Navy had come over the side, to the bark of saluting cannon, the bosuns piped, the drums and bugles rolled the required ruffles, and the ship's company, all in white, stood at parade rest while the admiral and the captain of the winning ship had escorted the secretary, in his frock coat and polished high hat, past the proud lines of as fighting a crew as the Navy had ever produced. And, proudest of all, stood Nolan, on the right flank of his division, blessing inwardly his turret "byes" who had so well rewarded his months of labor in training them.

Before them all, Nolan, in his C. P. O. uniform, with the eight gold stripes of thirty years, continuous service, and the gold chevrons of an enlisted man wounded in his country's service, was called out, to receive the gold E on his sleeve and the efficiency medal on his breast. There were strong, appreciative words spoken to him by his captain, in the presence of the secretary and the admiral, words that made a lump to rise in his throat and filled his heart to overflowing at the goodness of life, at the appreciation of his shipmates and the respect of his superior officers.

And then came a still more momentous ceremony, to

Nolan, that of retirement into the fleet reserve; for that day saw also the attainment of the sixty-two years of life's span which involuntarily retires every person in the service of the Navy. Still standing at attention, Nolan heard read the orders which retired him, spoken by the flag lieutenant in a voice that shook with emotion; and again his beloved captain, himself grown gray in the service, stepped forward, and in the presence of the whole ship's company presented Nolan a gold watch in token of the esteem of all the officers and men of the *Alaska*.

Nolan bore all these honors with the quiet philosophy of him who has seen much of life, who has more than deserved well of the republic. The kindly viewpoint of a Prospero was his: he knew men; he knew the service; and neither in a long lifetime had ultimately disappointed him.

After the ceremonies, a photograph of Nolan, standing beside the youngest apprentice recruit on the ship, was taken. Many a captain of the old days still treasures that photograph among his mementoes. With his snowy white hair, his heavy, drooping white mustache, his gentle, kindly air, yet under it the stern lines of absolute reliability and efficiency, amply attested to by the thirty years' service stripes covering his sleeves, Nolan was the ideal of what a chief petty officer may rise to before age requires his retirement. The full life of the service, a whole profession in itself, with its seamanship of a thousand ships, its rigid

military forms and ceremonials; its gunnery and engineering; reaching in Nolan's own recollection back to muzzle-loaders and low-pressure side-wheelers—all this was part and parcel of the experiences that lined that serene old face. What memories were his! Beginning with raw apprentice days on the old wooden ships under Farragut and Porter—extending on through the period when the White Squadron was the admiration of the world; twining proudly around the gray ship days of the Spanish War, when Nolan saw the sea power of Castile go down to utter annihilation before our old battleships with their low-velocity 13-inch guns; and then on through the years when the modern dreadnoughts rendered the battleships obsolete and the world's efficiency in gunfire and seamanship was won by the fleet that steamed round the world—Nolan had seen them all; had seen midshipmen from the Academy grow to grizzled captains as his shipmates, serving under them in various ships and many cruises. He was the whole Navy himself, in miniature, the enlisted man, bone and backbone of the service!

The year the Great War broke out found Nolan living in retirement, in a little harbor town, just as close to the edge of salt water as he could get. Where a tiny tide-water creek made the bay shore was a sandy point, grown up with tall, white seaside clover, and back of it a small field, surrounded with pine forest.

Here "Cap'n" Nolan had built him a white barnboard cottage, kept as neat and clean as its owner. It was overrun with gorgeous trumpet vines, which extended their shelter to a few outhouses, where a flock of Minorcas kept the Cap'n in eggs. A sharpie, anchored to a stake in the creek, provided her owner with a craft in which to cruise and fish (much of the catch being salted down or smoked for the winter), and a garden in the cleared field furnished fresh vegetables, potatoes, and roots for the winter seasons. With his pension, the old Cap'n was far from want, and always quite busy enough to keep happy.

For further revenue a chain of lobster pots received Nolan's assiduous attention, and for customers he had but to go up on Commodore Hill, with one huge, wiggling green crustacean in either hand, to receive a cordial welcome from the stately ladies who lived in the great houses overlooking the blue bay. For Commodore Hill, sacred in the eyes of the townsfolk, ought really to be made a National Monument. Here, in these old houses dating back to 1812, have lived for generations the families of retired admirals and commodores of the service. Here Bainbridge, Truxton, and Hull passed the evenings of their days, looking out over the sea which was their life and their glory. Here lived Purviance, Foote, Ammen, and others of the famous commodores of Civil War times, so that the salt sea might never be far from their eyes. There is even a tradition of one old commandant who never

failed to take a sextant sight at high noon until the day of his death! And, as for clocks, there is no such landlubberly invention anywhere on the hill: the time of day there is measured by the rapid strokes of ship's chronometer bells, no less!

On the day that the United States entered the war, Nolan was perspiring his way up the green slopes of one of the ancient mansions of Commodore Hill, a pair of particularly lively and immense lobsters held in either hand. On the greensward, in an invalid's chair, sat a grand old dame, the widow of Admiral DeCourtney.

"This is Nolan, is it not?" she inquired austere-ly, hearing his labored breathing approaching, for she was totally blind.

"True for ye, ma'am; good mornin' to ye!" replied Nolan cheerily. "An' 'tis two fine wans I have for ye, ma'am, fresh from Rocky Point."

"Very good, my lad. Have you heard the grand news? Those grannies down at Washington have at last come to their senses and declared war on these barbarous Huns! It's about time!" sniffed the old lady scornfully. "Admiral DeCourtney would have blown their cowardly submarines out of water long ago! Patience! Don't talk to me of patience! Since when has any power dared to flout the United States as Germany has! In my time it meant war to so much as take a single seaman from an American clipper!" The old widow ran out of breath and shook

her head violently, an infirmity more of years than of spirit, while her attendant tried to soothe her ruffled ire.

"An' 'tis war between us an' th' Dutch, eh?" came back Nolan joyfully. "Hooroo!—an' lady, 'tis bouse on th' main brace for you an' me, thin?"

"Aye, aye, Nolan, my lad! You to your recruiting station, orders of Admiral DeCourtney, deceased—and as for me, I shall organize a chapter of the Red Cross at once. Hibbard," turning her sightless eyes to her attendant, "bring your writing pad," she ordered, shaking her head vigorously. "Flemish down those lobsters in the kitchen, Nolan. Tell the cook to pay you well for them."

Nolan bought a paper, the first in many months, and, once back in the shade of his veranda, adjusted a pair of spectacles and spread the paper out on his knees with a huge, horny thumb.

Yes, it was all true. There were the scare headlines. The United States was at war again; once more, as always, in the cause of Liberty. Nolan spelled out the words, and then put the paper down and went inside the cottage to a great cedar sea chest, which he opened with solemn ceremony. In it were a seaman's most cherished possessions a daguerreotype of his mother; certain hard-won medals; service bars representing the many small campaigns of the Navy and the two big wars since his enlistment; suits of

whites; black ribbon ties; and, most cherished of all, the blue C. P. O. coat with its eight gold bars, each representing four years of continuous service in the Navy, the gold being for wounds received in the line of duty. Well he remembered that day at Guantanamo when the marines went ashore, and the fleet bombarded the blockhouse on McCalla Hill to the tune of rifle and shell fire from the Spaniards!

Slowly and painstakingly he dressed, and then, satisfied that the uniform looked as well as ever, albeit a trifle wrinkled, he took whatever money he could find in the cottage and set out for the train to the city.

It went through a commuters' district; here and there a factory, mostly little parklike developments of the real-estate agent's art, inhabited principally by clerks and small business men. At a certain station the train passed a large cemetery, the plaza in front of its office adorned with a flagpole guarded by two rusty three-inch rifles on naval mounts. The cheap commercialism that would attempt to appeal to bereaved military families by a display of naval ordnance, bought from some second hand dealer, always gruelled Nolan. More so yet, the dishevelled and unkempt appearance of these weapons of war, with their locks stolen by mischievous boys, and the muzzle of one gun pointing vacuously to the sky and that of the other nosing ingloriously into the daisies of the field—Nolan had served under captains who would have masted any gunner's mate caught with so much

as one gun of the battery the least inch out of exact horizontal. He squirmed now, as he passed them, and cursed the Jew management of the cemetery for a lot of abandoned landlubbers.

A hot walk past innumerable city stores, and then Nolan labored up a dark staircase under the blue recruiting flag with the gold letters of the Navy, and rolled his way into the station. The place swarmed with bluejackets. Their alert ways and the general shipshape air of the place told him that the service had not deteriorated. A young yeoman came up and respectfully inquired his business.

"'Tis th' commissioned officer in charge I wish to see, me lad," beamed Nolan, mopping his face with a red bandanna.

"In there," directed the sailor with a thumb at the glass door of the office, and skipped away.

Nolan pushed open the door and stepped inside, to confront an ensign whose heavy frame and middle-age appearance indicated that he, too, was recently from the ranks.

"Well, I'm blowed! Barton!" chortled the old chief gunner joyfully. "Me boy, 'tis I that am glad to see ye! Sure wasn't ye Jimmy Legs on the ould *Texas* when I was last shipmates wid ye—a mere lad with no crow on yer arm at all! An' now ye hav wan gold stripe an' a star, begorrah!"

Barton thumped him affectionately as he shook hands. "Yep. Got up to warrant officer, and, when

this war broke out, they made a lot of us ensigns," he explained proudly.

"An' 'tis a fine officer ye'll make, too. I'm reportin' from th' fleet reserve for active duty sir—Barton, d'ye mind that 'sir' from the like of me to th' likes of ye!" chuckled Nolan, brimming over with bliss to be back with the Navy people once mōre.

Barton appraised him carefully. "We'd love to have you back, you old barnacle; but man, dear, you haven't a tooth in your head!" he demurred. "Old Sawbones will never pass you."

Nolan bristled fiercely. "Blow my dogvanes, but ten years ago I'd have knocked ye into th' scuppers for less, me lad!—I mean 'sir,'" he corrected hastily. "Arrah, insign, darlint, sure I'm as sound as a cherry—ye'll not be lettin' a few tathe bar old Nolan, will ye?—him wid thirty years, continuous service on his record, sir."

"Come upstairs and strip, and we'll see what we can do," said Barton sympathetically. "Maybe I can fix it up with the doc."

Nolan went into a room crowded with husky youths in the glory of primal nakedness. Most of them were so green that they saluted his gold bars at sight; all were convinced that he could be nothing less awesome than an admiral. In an obscure corner Nolan divested his uniform and took his place in the long line of naked youngsters, all waiting for their turn within the glass doors of the surgeon's office. After an inter-

minable wait he was ushered in by a brusque and businesslike master-at-arms. Young Assistant Surgeon Howell sized him up with hard, glittering eyes. It was a magnificent old body, a trifle fat maybe, but with the torso and statuesque frame of an elderly Greek philosopher.

The surgeon was brief and impersonal. "Knees to chin!" he commanded. Nolan, with a herculean struggle, managed to kick first one knee and then the other up against his chin.

"Jump!" barked the surgeon. Nolan jumped—twenty times, nearly going purple with exertion.

"Hands!—Do as I do!"

Nolan gripped his fingers ten times rapidly, his eyes on the doctor's.

"Toes!"

Nolan came up on his toes again and again. At the eighteenth time, force his will power as he would, the left foot refused to rise again.

"Flat arch!" pronounced the surgeon, noting the defect on his card. Nolan next passed the whispering test, at twenty feet distance, and then got 15/20 on his eyes—just squeaked through.

"Mouth!" ordered the surgeon, pressing down Nolan's gums with a sterilized wooden spatula. He peered into the cavity. It was empty; a chasm, a void—after the spatula had pried loose several false sets.

"All molars wanting; two premolars gone, right; three left! Hmm—you won't do, my man," he said

kindly. "Sorry; we cannot take you with those teeth, even from the fleet reserve. There is nothing to bridge on, either."

The judgment was final. Nolan returned to his clothes pile with a bitter heart. He was in surreptitious tears before he again put on the cherished coat, realizing that now he had no right to wear it. Barton, all sympathy, took him up to the senior surgeon, who looked the record over through severe eyes.

"What! Sixty-five years old!" he frowned. "Tut, tut! and not a tooth in his head! We cannot accept him, even for retired duty. Why did you bring him to me, Barton?"

"We surely can use men of his training, sir," offered Barton, pointing to the gold service bars.

"Not in this war. I'm afraid we can do nothing, ensign," pronounced the surgeon, after some deliberation. "Good day, my lad," he smiled professionally on Nolan, dismissing him with a gesture.

Barton and Nolan turned away in silence. He gripped Nolan's hand hard as they parted at the recruiting-office door, but he dared not look in his eyes.

As the old chief gunner went out, a fresh apprentice piped up. "What did the dear old gentleman want, anyway?" cawed the youth raucously.

"'Dear ould gintleman,' avick!" snorted Nolan to himself as he went down the stairs—couldn't the young jackanapes see the gold E on his arm! If he only had the right to that uniform.

That night the misery of the rejected reigned in the little white cottage by the sea. Nolan tossed and fretted restlessly. Never for one moment did he blame the service, his beloved Navy—but—surely the Government needed him, old as he was, when raw boys with only a few months' intensive cramming in the naval reserve were getting ratings it takes a regular years to acquire! It did not seem fair that he should be left out because of a few teeth, when mere gobs not able to so much as bore-sight a six-pounder would get gunner's ratings in the reserve, so great was the country's need. He finally sank into a fitful sleep, where the fancies and memories of thirty years in the Navy jumbled, a chaos of nightmares, in his brain.

Next morning he awoke with a dull sense of injury and a tired, aged feeling throughout his vigorous old body. Then, like a blissful sea wave, washing his soul clean of all frets and worries, came the Big Idea. He could still do his bit, and do it magnificently! Those guns in front of the cemetery!—he had it now!

He sprang out of bed and dressed radiantly. A pot of coffee and a couple of fresh eggs went on the oil stove in the cottage kitchenette, and, betimes in the morning, Nolan was off to the train again. He got off at the cemetery station and waddled up to the office, imposing in his gold-striped uniform and row of medals. Lefkowitz, the superintendent of the cemetery, thought that at least an admiral was calling on him, and hastened to proffer his best box of cigars.

Nolan seated himself in the office and eyed him severely. "'Tis bonds for the First Liberty Loan I'm callin' on ye for to take, me good man," he opened craftily, after the usual preliminaries.

The Jew smiled a yellow, deprecating smile and offered another cigar. "Oy—oy!" he almost wept, shooting out his hands, "I should buy bonds! Listen, captain—times is hard, you understand me! Not now, but soon, I *will*, so help me! Business is *awful*, you understand me, admiral—not a corpse has passed that gate in two——"

"Avast! 'Tis no excuse ye have, me Haybrew fri'nd," retorted Nolan magisterially. "Th' Gov'mint—an' particularly th' Navy—needs th' money. No wan is iximpt. Shall I write ye down for two bonds?"

Confronted with the actual necessity of spending real money, Lefkowitz broke down and cried. His children would starve, his business would be ruined, he told the unsympathetic Nolan. Couldn't the—er—admiral let him off this once? "Listen; come again, next week, admiral," he begged earnestly. "Some one should die, maybe, and I should have by then a corpse, already——"

Nolan played his trump card. "In lieu av th' cash," he decided pompously, "th' Gov'mint will accpt th' two guns that ye hov—most lubberly—trained wid their noses in th' grass out in front av th' cimitery. Thim an' their mounts I will sind for to-morrow—in rayturn for which I will sind ye th' two bonds mesilf.

"Thot is th' best the Gov'mint can do for ye, me good man."

The Jew pondered. Those guns had cost him just \$18.76 as old scrap iron, and half their breech mechanisms were missing. Why—Moses and Israel!—it was a *bargain*! Two Government bonds! Say!—

"Take them, admiral! Take them and welcome! Send the bonds whenever it pleases the admiral (Nolan swelled with pride at the title), if he will be so good!" And, bowing and rubbing his hands, Lefkowitz ushered Nolan out of the office door, saw him to the station and helped him on the return train, stuffing a few more cigars in his breast pocket as he assisted him to the platform.

Nolan went straight to McCarty, the fat Irish blacksmith of the town. Anything the Cap'n wanted—especially on Government business—he could have. He always paid his bills! A team was despatched to the cemetery with some tackle and a couple of husky farriers aboard, and then Nolan stumped off to Kelly, the contractor, and arranged for a load of concrete materials. These were war times and when the Cap'n said he wanted something for the Government, he got it!

The next day Nolan was up early, clad in overalls and armed with a mason's trowel. There was a tiny lawn out in front of his cottage, where the main road passed the door, and it had a flagpole, on which the Cap'n was wont to fly storm signals, and always the

National Ensign. Here Nolan worked happily all the morning, digging two holes for concrete gun emplacements and filling them with cement mixed with his own hands. The guns arrived that afternoon and their mounts were soon in place, resting on the wet, fresh concrete, with the foundation bolts properly sunk in the mixture.

That night Nolan and McCarty worked long and late over the missing levers from the breech mechanisms, the Cap'n showing with many drawings just how they were to be made, and, by the time the concrete was set, the missing parts had been forged, filed, and fitted.

For two more days Nolan worked blissfully at making canvas covers for the guns and at cleaning the oceans of rust off bore and action. Then he went again to the city and procured some dummy ammunition from a military goods dealer, returning with which, he was ready to put the Big Idea into action.

The morning of the Big Day, Nolan got up early and dressed with unusual care. He put on the forbidden C. P. O. uniform with the gold stripes and the gold E under the grand old crow surmounting his gold chevrons. He looked proudly down at the crossed cannons, just as he had nearly gotten cross-eyed looking at them when they bore but the single red chevron of a gunner's mate, third class, a kid on the old *Kearsage*! He stumped ponderously out into the yard, ran up the Colors at precisely eight bells, took off the can-

vas gun covers, and then put up a large blackboard on a tree in the yard, bearing the legend:

U. S. NAVAL TRAINING STATION

RECRUITS TRAINED HERE FOR GUNNER'S MATE

RATINGS

WELCOME!

The Cap'n sat him down in a chair under the shade of the tree, but he had not long to wait. Presently an urchin came skipping by, whirling a pair of tights by their string, on his way for a swim. He stopped, open-mouthed; Then he whirled about.

"Hi, Freckles!" he called to another coming down the road, "Cap'n Nolan's going to train gunners for the Gov'mint!" he yelled.

Freckles couldn't get there fast enough. The yard certainly looked as military as a fort, with the two trim three-inch rifles on their naval gun mounts and the Flag flying lazily overhead. A group of urchins gathered like magic, and then, the swim forgot, they were off like hawks for the village, shouting the news. A knot of loafers forthwith pried themselves off the village hotel veranda posts, and another group of louts lying in the grass around the railroad station sat up and wanted to know what was going on. Then they all set off for Cap'n Nolan's cottage.

They found Nolan standing, very erect, very military, very dignified, beside the flagpole. When quite a crowd had gathered he addressed them. "Ye byes who want to enlist in th' Navy, why not go in with a

good ratin' instead of apprentice seamen, which is no more than a landlubber if ye want plain talk. I'm here to train any group of lads that wants to be gunners—an' ye all do! An' up at th' recrootin' station they'll be glad to get ye, knowin' wan ind of a gun from the other, an' they'll give ye a gunner's mate ratin', third class. 'Tis my bit for our grand and glorious Navy, an' glad it is I am to be after doin' it. Come in an' look over thim guns. We nade six lads to start the first gun crew."

There was a rush inside the gate. Nolan seized the psychologic moment, and, intuitively picking his men, soon had six selected and had shoved the rest outside the yard where they hung over the fence, eying the guns enviously.

Then, "Fall in!" he commanded, stepping to the front. There was an awkward scuffle, and the six stood in a straggly line, facing him. Nolan straightened it. Then, "Right, dress!—shoulder to shoulder, ye divvils—close up, there, you second on the left! Front!—turn yer eyes lookin' straight forrd!" He walked up an down, inspecting each lout severely.

"Stations!" barked Nolan. "You, lad," to a tall, serious-looking youth, "to the breech mechanism—you're plugman, gun captain. You, young feller," to a husky young oysterman, "put your shoulder to that recoil pad an' your eye to the sights—you're gun pointer," and with a few deft shoves Nolan had him in correct position beside the gun mount.

"Here, you, little man," to a bright, alert young red-head, "you'll make a fine sight setter—come over here—I *want* you!" He laid his hand on the brass sight gear. "This is the azimuth head, an' this th' 'sword' as we call the elevation quadrant. Thim marks are in thousand yards, an' ye'll set th' azimuth head to the range when I give it ye. Now, thin, look alive, you three—you're first, second, an' third shellman, an' ye'll take this shell an' insert it in th' breech whin I pass th' word."

There was a silence, as Nolan surveyed his crew. "All right!" he pronounced, "fall in for muster an' do it all over again—March!" They left their positions and formed a line, this time a good, straight one.

"Right, dress! Front!—Good byes—ye'd think ye hod been in th' service a year already!" blarneyed Nolan.

"Stations!" They ran to their places at the double. Nolan looked out to sea through his binoculars. Sighting a red buoy, he announced the range at 1700 yards. Immediately the gun swung on the mark while the youth at the azimuth head quickly set his bar at the range. Nolan inspected it judgmatically. "Th' speed of yon ship is fourteen knots; we are making sixteen—what's the deflection?" he asked the sight setter.

"Two," guessed the youth quickly.

"Right! Ye hov th' idea. Now turnn th' deflection drum to 1700 yards and set it over to the left two

points, for 'tis to port that both ships are steaming—load!” he ordered.

There was an awkward series of bumbles between the plugman and the shellman. The breech refused to come open with military smoothness and the shell seemed to get in everyone's way as it was passed forward. Nolan was everywhere, showing the plugman how to pass the ammunition with the least possible motion and the most precision. “Don't be afraid of it, lad!” he yelled to the first shellman. “Shove it well home—th' breech won't catch your fingers! You, second shellman, have that next load ready; an' you, third man, stand by to catch th' impty shell when it comes out of th' gun an' pass up a new wan. 'Tis like a football team, byes; ivry man must do his part like clockwork, an' no wan git in th' other fellow's way—commence firing!”

The plugman pressed the cocking lever, and the sharp snap of the hammer followed. Instantly the plugman pulled the lever and the shell flew out in the third shellman's hands, Nolan forcibly yanking the first shellman out of the way to permit the evolution. Again and again the gun was fired with dummy ammunition, until the crew came to have something of the clocklike regularity of Navy standards. “Range, wan thousand yards!” shouted Nolan, and the sight setter learned to change the range while the gun was firing.

“Take thim three buoys in turrn, lad,” he shouted

to the pointer. "Swing to thim an' catch yer sights before the boys gets the new shell in!"

It was fast work, and for half an hour the crew drilled steadily until the pointer showed by his steady piece that he was on the mark before the hammer came down.

"Secure!" ordered Nolan. "Fall in for muster!" and under his skillful direction the boys learned how to secure the gun in a fixed horizontal position and stow the ammunition in the rack he had provided for the purpose, finally dressing in line and facing him under the orders of their own gun captain.

"All right, gobs: Rest!" he addressed them. "Th' rig'lar Navy three-inch is semi-automatic, byes; that is to say, it opens its own breech by a spring when it is fired, an' ye have to work fast to keep up with it, with real loads. Slow an' easy is th' worrd, until ye hov ivry motion down shipshape. Drill yer crew now, me lad, while I start another wan. Recruits for th' other gun!" he called over the fence.

There was a mad dash of candidates, and in a few minutes of pushing and sorting he had another picked crew. The sharp commands of his first crew going into action were music to Nolan's ears as he watched them out of the tail of his eye, shouting a correction now and then while he busily drilled his new crew. His bit, indeed!

In an hour more he had both crews at work under

their own captains, while he supervised them both, for all the world like a division officer aboard ship, and the climax of the morning came when he called, "Secure!" for the last time and then gave the order, "Muster the sections!" Proud was Nolan to be doing a commissioned officer's work!

They fell in, a long line, each with its chief petty officer on the right of his section. Nolan stood rigidly in front, while the two petty officers reported their sections mustered. "'Tis to the division officer I'm reporting," explained Nolan as he about-faced, and, saluting a tree, "Sir, the division is mustered!" he announced. "'Tis aboard ship we are, byes, an' th' lines is facin' to starboard. Fall in, in two lines, now, for inspection, for the officer will be after inspictin' us. Open ranks, march! dress on me, you there in the rear line," he added, coming around later to his proper post. "Th' tree is th' officer, an' I'll give you his orders—'Hand, salute!'—up with yer hands, ye divvils! Hold 'em there until I order 'Two!' thin drop thim an' stand at attention while he inspects us. Now, thin," after a suitable pause, "he's through, an' I hope ye had each an' ivry detail av yer uniform spick an' span, or ye'd git a bad mark! Now he's back in front of us again. Listen:—'Close ranks, march!—Parade, rest!—'tis done. That's all for to-day, boys; this afternoon I will drill crews Three and Four," he added, turning to the crowd. "Ten to twelve o'clock, Crews One and Two; three to five, Crews Three and Four."

Nolan dismissed them and sat down, mopping his face. The Idea had begun well; there was no lack of raw material. From being an unknown thing to these recruits, a place of strangers and harsh novitiate, the Navy had become real, personal; a place where a friend taught you something and sent you to the ordeal of the recruiting station already vouched for and started on the desideratum of all naval service—gunnery! Unconsciously Nolan had solved the hardest problem in Navy recruiting, the assurance to the candidate that he is going to get something more inspiring than mess attendant before taking the irrevocable plunge of enlistment. With Nolan to lead them in, many a country boy who had held off even to the draft, felt that his greatest perplexities were solved. He knew, now, where he was headed and what was going to happen to him—gunner's mate, third class; and nothing else mattered!

The next day Crews No. 1 and 2 were on hand sharp at ten, bringing with them a heterogeneous collection of small rifles and fowling pieces. Nolan added the Manual of Arms to their gunnery training, and in the latter they began to show some glimmerings of the precise teamwork of a real naval crew. Nolan worked ceaselessly, here, there, and everywhere, now straightening up a sloppy line, now correcting a careless shell passer or cautioning an over-excited sight setter. By the end of the week the boys surprised him by reporting in sailor whites, bought out of their own

pockets from the town ship chandlery, and the two crews began to make the place take on the appearance of a real naval-gunnery school.

Then a period of slackness set in, and, after some pondering, Nolan ferreted out the trouble. Those boys wanted the guns to go off; to hit something when the hammer came down. He had no money to buy sub-caliber tubes and their ammunition, so after deciding to put a mortgage on the cottage to raise the money, Nolan set out with much inward trepidation for the town bank.

The shrewd Yankee who was president of it heard him out, and shook his head emphatically. "No, sir, Captain, this bank has stood by the Government in three wars, and will do it now. We could not *think* of letting you risk your home in your old age for any such purpose. How much will these subcaliber tubes and their ammunition cost?"

Nolan named the modest figure.

"Please accept this as the bank's donation to the gunnery school, then, Nolan," smiled the president, drawing a check for the amount.

Nolan cashed it with a relieved and thankful heart. How good the world was! At sixty-five one can appreciate it!

A busy day followed, spent by the crews in anchoring out targets, and then, with the sharpie acting as guard boat, the crews began to see how really accurate they were with a three-inch rifle. The little .45's spat

foam round the targets and soon direct hits began to occur with refreshing regularity.

Nolan got his reward a week later, when the captains of the two first crews took him aside and told him, confidentially, that their boys wished to enlist in the service. Nolan saw their parents, as a matter of form, and then gleefully entrained with them for the city recruiting station. When he came into the office with his twelve recruits, all in sailor whites, Barton was amazed.

"What's this, old scout—and why are you in that uniform?" he inquired, drawing Nolan aside.

"Shush! Speak easy, me lad! Soft on th' uniform!" came back Nolan in a stage whisper. "'Tis two fine gun crews I have for you insign."

"Gun crews! Where were they trained? Where did they enlist? Why in thunder did you bring them here?"

"Sure, I trained 'em mesilf—here, I've me at that six-pounder in the station, insign darlint, an' I'll show ye!—Stations!" he called to the captain of the No. 1 crew. Instantly six white-clad rookies fell in beside the naval gun, kept for instruction purposes on the station floor, while Barton looked on, open-mouthed.

"Load!" ordered Nolan. His plugman threw open the breech with the precision of an old-timer, and the shellman passed a shell which lay handy on a rack. Already the pointer was at his post and the sight

setter at his azimuth head. "Commence firing!" went on Nolan before the astonished ensign, and his crew drilled, while critical bluejackets looked on with appreciative eyes. Then, "Secure!" and the gun was put back, shipshape and Bristol fashion, while the shell was stowed in its rack.

Barton grinned feebly. "Go on!" he murmured, "they've got me hanging to the ropes!" Nolan put the other crew through their paces and then had them muster their own sections and report to him. Barton, falling in with the game, took them through division drill to parade rest;—never had recruits like these come before him. "Take them up to the doc!" he ordered to his chief petty officer. "Nolan, I'll rate every man jack of them he passes, gunner's mate, *second class!*"

That was the beginning of Nolan's triumph, but it did not end there. All summer he worked, drilling raw country boys and baymen, and steadily the score rose on the blackboard until it bore the legend, "16 Gun Crews Trained Here for the U. S. Navy!" Nolan's fame went far throughout the hinterland. Boys even came by train and bicycle to get trained for a *rating* before enlistment, and Nolan, in his gold stripes, *was* the happiest and proudest retired enlisted man who ever wore the service uniform.

Then Fate, with her customary blindness, struck out at him and laid him in the dust. Down the road came

rolling, in his seven-thousand dollar touring car, a real admiral! Now, anyone can become an admiral—of sorts—if old enough, provided that one graduates high in one's studies at Annapolis and keeps on steadily rising until retirement age. This admiral commanded thirteen men and a few petty officers in a skyscraper office in the city, and held the proud, albeit safe, position of Resident Inspector of Yards and Docks. Out in front of Nolan's yard were two crews in whites, firing subcalibers energetically and accurately at targets out at sea, while the guard boat hovered in the offing. The admiral's car stopped, and, resplendent in white, with gold epaulets, he frowned long and fixedly through tortoise-shell goggles at the legend on the blackboard.

"Secure!" called Nolan hurriedly, and then stood at rigid salute. In a trembling daze he heard the sharp orders snapped behind him which mustered the sections. "Hand, Salute!" barked his senior gun captain.

"Two!" snarled the admiral, and in a dead silence the row of hands dropped. "By whose authority, may I ask, my man," began the admiral frigidly, "is what appears to be a gunnery station being conducted in my district? It's all news to me, I assure you!"

"Arrah, sure, sir," began Nolan in a shaky voice and a placating smile, "'tis no Navy crew at all, sir. Thim's just recruits that I'm giving a bit av training before taking them up to enlist, sir."

The admiral placed his fingers tip to tip, and regarded the unhappy Nolan with a cold stare. It was a blazing hot day, and the admiral's toupee felt hot and sticky, and the perspiration dripped down his face from every brown curl of it. He could not see the situation at all, nor did he recall any regulations covering it in the Blue Book.

"Chief Gunner's mate. Thirty years in the service," he noted, still staring at Nolan, who squirmed under the hostile scrutiny. "Again, may I inquire, why have you not reported to *me*—before undertaking this—ah—this unusual experiment?"

There was no escape. Nolan hastened to tell the story of how he had rushed to report for active duty on the outbreak of war—"but me tathe, sir, I hov none that are me own, so they could not take me, an' I'm after doin' me bit this way, sir," he concluded, waving his hand at the blackboard.

"Then why are you wearing that uniform?" barked the admiral angrily. "You know better, and you know well the penalty! Take it off at once! Sharpless, arrest this person," he ordered the jacky who drove his car.

"Arrah, admiral, darlint, ye'll not be too hard on poor old Nolan!" begged the gunner humbly. "Ye'll not be arristin' me, sir, whin I tried so hard to do something for the service, sir——"

"Silence! Take off that coat! And where did you

get those naval guns? Sharpless, I must see to this! Do not let him escape."

"I bought them wid me own money, sir," protested Nolan. "I gave the Jew two Liberty Bonds for thim, so I could train the byes. An' as for the coat, how could I seem to have the authority to drill them, sir, without it? See, the goold E., admiral," pleaded Nolan, showing the efficiency E on his sleeve.

"Silence!" The admiral stared fixedly before him and then adjusted the curls of his toupee firmly. "Bring him in the car, Sharpless."

The automobile whirled away, and presently Nolan found himself committed to the town jail, on charge of wearing the United States uniform without authority. The case against him was clear cut, and the judge sentenced him next day with official celerity. Nolan's friend, the bank president, paid the heavy fine, and, released, he went back dejectedly to his cottage, put the canvas covers on the guns, and took down the blackboard sign. The news of his disgrace spread quickly, and no more crews came for training. Without the sanction of the Government, no would-be recruit would venture near.

The old Cap'n brooded over his harsh treatment for some days in melancholy resignation. It was his own fault, he told himself at length, and then he put the affair out of his mind with the serene philosophy of his age and set out his lobster pots once more. A

few days later he started for the DeCourtney house with a pair of fresh lobsters for the old admiral's widow. He found the grand old dame surrounded by a bevy of eager young girls, all busily at work on Red Cross bandages. She frowned as she heard his familiar footsteps and labored breathing approaching.

"Can that be you, Nolan?" she inquired severely, bending her sightless eyes in his direction, "and attempting to sell me lobsters when you should be at a man's work? I'm astonished at you—indeed I am!" and she shook her head violently.

Nolan told her the story of his training school and the admiral's ban.

"Admiral who?" asked Mrs. DeCourtney austere-ly.

"Townley, ma'am."

"Townley? The name is unfamiliar to me. What fleet did *he* ever command? What squadron of ships ever served under *him*?—I thought I knew them all."

"Shure, an' 'tis no fleet the likes ov him iver led!" burst out Nolan bitterly. "He hov thirteen enlisted men an a petty officer under him, an' he's the Risidint Inspictor av this district. I niver was shipmates with him in the thirty-two years I was in the service!"

"And you never will be, Nolan. One of those desk admirals, I'll warrant!" sneered the old lady, wagging her head uncompromisingly, "Nolan, you have been shamefully treated. Tell me, who is head of the bureau, now?"

"Admiral Roberts, ma'am—an' a fine man he is, too. I served wid him on the——"

"Silence! Let me think," said Mrs. DeCourtney. "Roberts? Ah, yes, I remember him—lieutenant on the *Portsmouth* when my husband was her captain—a fine young fellow! So he is admiral now, eh—and chief of the bureau! Mercy me, how time does fly! Nolan, you leave matters to me, my lad! I think I still have *some* influence with the bureau!" she snorted.

And that is how a certain formerly Lieutenant Roberts, now admiral and chief of the bureau, received a letter in a quaint feminine hand from a certain stately old dame on Commodore Hill; and also how Chief Gunner's Mate Nolan was amazed to receive, shortly after, a letter from Washington, containing the following orders:

"1. You are hereby appointed to the provisional rank of Warrant Gunner, in Class I, the Fleet Reserve."

"2. Report for active duty as turret captain, U. S. S. *Alaska*, all physical disqualifications waived.

"ROBERTS,

"Rear Admiral, U. S. N."

Nolan wept Celtic tears of joy. Never yet in sixty-five years had this good old world ultimately disappointed him!

S. C.-1030

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ALDRICH, executive officer of the U. S. armored cruiser *Augusta*, came into the steerage—the junior officers' mess—of the warship. Instantly the youngsters exploded out of their chairs and stood at attention, all but Nicky, the Class 4 reserve ensign. That youth, who knew more ways of getting himself into trouble than any "mustang" who ever got into a boat, arose gawkily and made a wavering salute.

Aldrich frowned, the dignity of his three gold stripes being visibly affronted, but he overlooked the lapse, for Ensign Nicholas Trunbull, U. S. N. R. F., late of the Great Bay training station, was but a rank outsider, as the reserve shield on his collar indicated.

"Gentlemen, be seated," Aldrich waved them to "at ease," taking a swivel chair himself at the mess table. "Ensign Trunbull——"

"Here!" spoke up Nicky eagerly, squaring himself at attention.

"I suppose you'll learn to say 'Yes, sir,' after you've been a year or two in the service!" grunted the commander sarcastically.

"Yes, sir!" murmured Nicky bashfully.

"Very good. You are to have the guard boat

to-morrow, youngster—and for God's sake don't fizzle it, now, or the admiral'll think we're all a bunch of beach crabs. It's the easiest job aboard this ship; all you have to do is to keep an eye on the flagship, and when the admiral runs up the guard-boat pennant, look alive with the gig and get whatever orders he has for you to deliver to the fleet."

"Aye, aye, sir," cut in Nicky, very respectfully.

"Don't say that," frowned the commander, "that's for enlisted men—try again."

"Yes, sir!" came back Nicky triumphantly.

"All right. You understand, do you not? You're on duty from eight to six and will have the second gig. By the way, unofficially, I hear that you are to be detached and ordered to command one of these new 110-foot sub chasers. Ought to be right in your line, as a former yachtsman and skipper of the Q-19——"

"Glory!" gasped Nicky happily. "I mean 'yes, sir,' commander," as Aldrich's face began to grow grim again, "I sure am Exhibit A on this warship for greenness, sir—but I just *know* I can make good on a sub chaser."

"Wish you luck," returned the commander dryly "We Navy men don't think much of them. With a little three-inch Davis gun for'd and the Hun sub mounting a six-inch, man-sized rifle, she'd sure stage an old-fashioned massacre with you."

"Your spit kit wouldn't have a chance!" put in Ensign Tatham, a regular. "The best thing you could

do, Nicky, would be to stick close to shore. What'd you do if Germany were to send over a fleet of cruising subs and you should run into one?"

Nicky grinned thoughtfully and scraped at a two days, growth of reddish fringe on his chin. He had yet to realize that the regulations do not forgive neglect of the razor in the press of one's ship-routine duties. "Well," he said at length, "I guess I'd bring her in."

"How?" demanded the regulars in derisive chorus.

"Put something across on her—that's how!" snapped Nicky, facing the steerage defiantly. "Do something original, something that you hidebound martinets would never think of—because it isn't in your Blue Book! A regular is a regular, always sticking close to his regulations and a Hun regular'd never do anything outside of *his* Blue Book either—I'm not afraid of him!" shouted Nicky, banging his fist down on the table.

"Silence!" barked the commander, rising angrily. "Young man, I think you forget yourself! An official reprimand will be your next experience if you don't mend your tongue."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir!" apologized Nicky, "I—I forgot your presence, sir." He relapsed into an awkward, miserable silence. The executive went out, with the steerage standing at salute. Nicky stood in sullen silence. He had put his hand in the tar bucket that time, gloriously and completely!

"You're sure in a state of abysmal savagery, Kid,"

murmured Tatham awesomely. "What the exec. will do to *you* will be a-plenty when he gets back to the captain!"

"'Language unbecoming an officer and a gentleman'—that's what the Old Man will hand you, and it'll be a bad mark on your record, too," volunteered another ensign. "Better brace up, Kid, and, take my advice, you'd better hoe some of that hay off your chin before the captain sees you to-morrow."

Nicky smiled gratefully and went to his tiny state-room, which he shared with the breech of a five-inch rifle. The Navy was a great service, he reflected, as he undressed to turn in, but his short term of duty with the regulars had so far been just one comedy of errors. Things were done thus and so on a warship, and in no other way. *How* they were done he had been taught, in books, at Great Bay, but the point was to remember *just* how, when it came to actually doing them under the eyes of a warship full of fussy division officers. From the time he had foozled his first sentry hail on coming alongside to report for duty, followed by innocently attempting the unheard-of insolence of calling on the captain in person, things had gone hard with Nicky! Next morning he was up bright and early.

He dressed spick and span, and hied himself to the ship's barber shop, for two days on a Pullman *en route* to report to the *Augusta* and a day and a night aboard ship had done things to his beard. A reddish fringe encircled his visage, and one look at it in the glass con-

vinced Nicky that that engaging smile of his, encircled with all that seaweed, would be more than any senior officer's risibles could stand, besides being non-reg. The guard boat would not be on duty until eight, he understood, and there was yet half an hour to douse those Irish pennants on his figurehead.

While dreaming luxuriously in the barber's chair, came a sudden imperative rap on the door. It was the captain's orderly. "Ensign Trunbull?" he inquired, poking in his head. "Captain wishes you to report on the quarter-deck immediately."

Nicky looked up. One side of him was a mass of creamy lather, the other clean and clear, about down to the chin. "Will you give the captain my compliments, and tell him that I am shaving and will be on deck in a very few minutes?" he ululated in his very best Bostonese. "Bouse on that barnacle effect lively, my Finnish friend," he added to the barber, relapsing again into Navy.

The orderly looked scandalized, but saluted and went away. In two minutes there came an imperious triple thunder of his fists on the door. "Captain's orders—Ensign Trunbull to report on deck *immediately!*" he shouted through the door. Nicky waited not on the order of his going, but grabbed up his blouse and ran for the deck, lather and all, buttoning the blouse as he went. The captain met him at the gangway, his face a thundercloud. He used up a lot of the English language and a whole lot more from Navy stock to

impress on Nicky that when he said "immediately" it meant just that, and that furthermore his quarter-deck was no toilet room, referring to the three open button-holes which that unfortunate was madly buttoning. "And hop right down into that gig, at once, sir," he stormed. "Don't you see the guard-boat pennant over on the flagship!"

Nicky tumbled into the gig and his gob shoved off. He washed off the lather with handfuls of cold sea water as soon as he was a reasonable distance from the *Augusta*, but there was no camouflaging that waving side of red fringe that the razor hadn't touched yet! To dive overboard and drown himself while there was yet time seemed the most reasonable thing to do! He could already see the amused grin on the face of the flagship's deck officer when he should set foot on those imperial precincts.

The fleet lay in a vast crescent, the flagship farthest out to sea. A stiff nor'wester was blowing, covering the bay with whitecaps, and presently the gig began to labor, throwing stinging spats of salt spray all over him at every other wave. The tar minded it not at all, for the wind blew his collar high over his neck and the back of his jacket shed it like a duck, but Nicky's blouse was of receptive material and in ten minutes he was soaked to the skin. Like a drowned rat he finally reached for the flagship's gangway and crawled up the steps. Sailors grinned at him openly from the bulwarks, and the officer of the deck turned to hide a

smile as he grimly handed Nicky the admiral's orders of the day. "Cutter drill for the entire fleet," he grinned. "Deliver one of these to each and every vessel of the fleet," he added eying the beard doubtfully.

"I know I'm a mere swine, compared to Navy standards," apologized Nicky, rubbing his face ruefully, "but——"

"Sure! They'll shoot you on the next ship," agreed the D. O., suppressing gusts of merriment that threatened to engulf discipline, "better clear out of here before the admiral gets an eye on you."

Nicky grabbed the orders and beat a swift retreat. He hated to bring contumely on his own ship by the hirsute display, but he realized that every deck officer on every ship of the squadron would have a wallop at the purple fringe of him.

The subsequent progress of that brazen bunch of red spinach was one riot of guffaws. "For the love of Mike!" growled the senior lieutenant, who met him at the gangway of the next ship. "What do you mean, youngster, by flaunting that thing around here?"

"Bandarlogwise, I forgot to shave in time," explained Nicky, proffering his orders bashfully.

"And, 'bandarlogwise,' you'll go back over the side and send up your sailor with your orders!" the D. O. snapped, cutting him short. "These things are supposed to be delivered by some one in *uniform*," objected the veteran pointedly. Nicky hopped for the gig.

On the next ship a square, black-eyed, hook-nosed

commander stared at him disconcertingly under a visor that showed nothing but an inflexible expanse of chin. "Orders of the day," gasped Nicky, poking a yellow slip at him. The commander made no move to take them, still eying him in stern silence. Evidently the majesty of his battleship was affronted.

"I ought to put you under arrest!" he began at length, as Nicky squirmed. Then, catching sight of the reserve shield on Nicky's collar, "Some one has wished a poached egg on the *Augusta* evidently."

"If I had depended more upon Excalibur and less on the ship's barber——" ventured Nicky explanatorily.

"'Excalibur' being your own razor, I take it," laughed the commander. "Well, we'll let it go this time—let's have the orders." Nicky retreated crabwise off the deck and set out once more.

The next D. O. was for calling his captain and having the unhappy Nicky up for court-martial, and by the time he got back to his own ship he felt that he was a marked man, a public disgrace, and that he had brought down contumely upon them all in the eyes of the whole fleet. He ordered the "duty complete" pennant run up on the *Augusta* and dashed below to his stateroom. Off came the freezing uniform and dripping underwear, and, grabbing Excalibur, Nicky shaved madly. He had gotten half the other cheek cleared, with a piece like a section of pumpkin pie still covering chin and jowl, when the captain's orderly

knocked again. "Captain wishes to see you on deck immediately, sir," he called through the stateroom door. Nicky flew into his last remaining pair of trousers, his broadcloth ones for dress affairs, buttoned up his blouse, and ran for the deck.

The captain eyed him from head to foot. "Ensign Trunbull, I require my officers to appear on the quarter-deck in uniform, sir," he observed icily. "Go below, sir, and report when you have finished your toilet."

"Yes, sir," saluted Nicky and dashed below again. He looked himself over hastily in the glass. What had he left undone this time? Ah, that was it—one tell-tale button had caught the captain's eagle eye. He buttoned it and reported.

The captain waved a hand at the flagship's rigging without a word. There flew the guard-boat pennant again. Nicky set out in the gig with alacrity. The sea was even rougher, and this time he reported, glistening with salt water and displaying an even more unusual cut of beard. The officer of the deck, comprehending at once, rolled back his head and yelled as he handed him a second sheaf of orders. "To each vessel of the fleet," he choked, "retreat from cutter drill—the admiral has decided that the sea's too rough. Crews will go to great-gun drill, at sea," he managed to gasp out. "Good God, youngster, you'll get it all off, yet!" he roared, leaning weakly against the bulkhead. "Look lively, now, pieface, we want to head off those orders before the cutters are away."

Nicky saluted and ran down to the gig with all possible speed. Cursing himself and resigning from the service in alternate gusts, he set out for the remaining ships, and again the ordeal, ten times worse than before, for every officer off duty gathered to see the fun, and the rails were crowded with grinning tars. There was no escaping the story of that pie-like tuft of hair, which stood out on his face like a smudge from the engineer stores! Nicky got back, more dead than alive, to be received with frowns of displeasure by his own ship. Some kindly soul had, however, taken his other blouse down to the engine room, where it had been dried on a steam pipe and pressed by the ship's tailor, and he managed to finish the shave while the ship was getting under way. His billet as junior division officer put him on duty again immediately he was dressed, and for the rest of the day the fleet fired at targets towed by fast steam launches, and Nicky began to feel some excuse for his existence again, for he proved himself a good shot with the five-inch rifle.

The captain was, however, still huffy, not to say frigid in his attitude toward Nicky. "He hates 'poached eggs'" (reservists), explained the steerage consolingly, "and you're worse than poached, you're scrambled. In fact, you're the only reservist on the ship, and it'll take us a whole cruise to make you even remotely presentable. Suppose, for instance, we

should run into the battle fleet and become one of its divisions, where in the world could we hide *you*? You'd have to play the game, and no fumbles either. See? You'll bilge, sure!"

Nicky glanced around the steerage. Every one of the youngsters wore the silver anchor of Annapolis; not one the crossed gold anchors and silver shield of the reserve, disrespectfully dubbed the "poached egg" by irrepressible apprentices among the regulars. The steerage was entirely cheerful about his proposed dismissal; he didn't belong, that was all. Nothing personal about it; but these youngsters had been under rigid Navy discipline for years, and when they spoke to a jack tar there was a "jump, damn you!" undertone of the voice that the sailorman recognizes as part of the stern game of war, and without which he would feel uneasy, disappointed—something wrong with his world, for every third class petty officer makes the man under him hop, even as he expects to be hopped by his chief petty officer and the stripers over him. It is the life and breath of the service!

The next day the captain called away his barge, and, when he returned from the flagship, he sent for Nicky. Contrary to expectations, he beamed on Nicky as that youth presented himself, quaking, in the captain's quarters.

"Young man, I spoke to the admiral about you this morning, and while we both agreed that there was no place for you aboard a fighting ship like the *Augusta*,

when we went over your record and saw that you were skipper of the Q-19 we had you placed in a trice. Why, sir, I've watched you race that infernal twenty-rater myself—two years ago it was, at Newport; and the admiral has recommended a detail that we feel will just suit your—ah—your original temperament, judging from the way you used to handle that yacht! Some day I should be glad to have you serving under me, but not now; you have a great deal too much to learn, and we have no time to teach you just at present. Here are your orders, detaching you from the *Augusta* and placing you on waiting orders, but, if the admiral's recommendation is acted on by the detail officer, you will have a very congenial duty awaiting you. Good day, sir."

Nicky took his orders and saluted in silence. Bilged! Once more and he would be down and out—disenrollment! The steerage wished him good luck cheerily, and by the time his suitcase was packed the dinghy was waiting for him at the starboard gangway, and that was the last he saw of the regulars. He could not help but feel depressed as they rowed away, and the tall masts of the warship dwindled over the blue distance widening between him and her. Bilged already, in a brief but stormy existence, yet he was as good a sailor as ever clapped a jigger on a rope! The Navy was a great service, but it was essential to find one's niche to get on in it, and not take the whole war to do it in, either!

Once on the beach he reported to the office of the Commandant, 20th Naval District, for further duty. After sitting around half a day the aide came out with official papers and Nicky opened them, to read with glad, amazed eyes:

"1. To duty in command of the S.C.-1030.

"2. These orders to take effect immediately.

"W. S. LEIGHTON.

"By direction."

"Where is she?" demanded Nicky breathlessly of the smiling aide.

"Over in Basin 10; her crew has already been detailed to her," returned the aide. "Say, you're the chap who was skipper of Q-19, aren't you?" he grinned. "Some devil boat! I own an eighteen-rater myself and would be glad to race you some day."

"Hope we pull it off, sir," gurgled Nicky, dying with ingrowing happiness. "What do I do next? I'm green as a hayraker at this official business."

"Report aboard of her to-day and take command. Make yourself at home, and report, via me, when you are ready to go into commission. I sent an old salt of a bosun aboard of her who can stand watch against you and will steer you on all the official business about your crew's pay accounts, your dock trials, and such matters that require orders from the commandant. Dope it out with him. Wish you luck—wish I was young enough to be an ensign, too! Good day, Q-19!" and the aide had backed into the com-

mandant's office, leaving Nicky standing on one foot and then on the other, with his orders idle in his hands.

He inquired his way to Basin 10, saluting everyone in the yard, and dodging around a big C. & R. building when he spied a four-striper bearing down on him with all sails set. Nicky had had trouble enough with captains before—who are more than apt to be stuffy and who run mostly to forty-two about the waistline.

The S.C.-1030 lay warped against the stringpiece of Basin 10. One hundred and ten feet of slim, gray gracefulness, she was Nicky's best girl the minute he set eyes on her. A trig wireless mast, with a miniature lookout cage, a searchlight and a string of blinker lights rose out in front of a boy-sized bridge. Under it were the square lights of a tiny chart room, where Nicky imagined himself, dividers in hand, laying out courses and figuring up dead reckonings—the captain, the Old Man—of an infinitesimal spit kit! Her forward deck mounted a long six-pounder; two machine guns aft snuggled down on the flat deck; the rest was just smooth turtleback, with a cabin aft jutting up above the deck, and the usual anchor gear for'd.

Nicky licked his chops anticipatively. His gobs were all Naval Reservists, twenty-four of them, three watches of eight men each; bright-faced, clear-eyed boys, collegians, high-school graduates, machinists, ex-chauffeurs—not a man jack of them over twenty-two. Nicky was enthusiastically installed by his Reserve

training-station crew, and soon encountered the grizzled old bosun, a Fleet Reserve man with three "hash bars" (enlistment stripes) on his sleeve. The old fellow turned over the command with touching deference, ingrained from former naval service—it was enough for him that Nicky wore the gold of a commissioned officer!

By way of general inspection of the sub chaser, Nicky, flanked by three explanatory chief machinists, peered down into the engine room at his three bright-red, 220-horsepower Standards; was shown his guns and had his depth-bomb triggers demonstrated to him by two bubbling gunner's mates; glanced through the hatch into the dark magazine well full of shell racks and painted depth bombs; and finally he and the bosun dove for the chart house, to take stock of each other's seamanship. Here was Home, a sailor's heaven! The ancient sea dog silently fell in love with Nicky, while they pawed over signal flags, thumbed the charts, took the sextant out of its box and sighted it critically, tried out the inside steering gear, and worked the various signal mechanisms. The afternoon flew, while Nicky and his bosun pored over mess-store accounts with the yeoman, and made up lists of everything needful for putting to sea. At five, the crew went to mess aboard the receiving ship, while Nicky sought a bite at the officers' club in the yard, and, after supper, Q-19 slipped away to rejoin his beloved S.C.-1030, where, in the moonlight, he and his ancient swapped

sea lore, and Nicky gathered knowledge of the official routines necessary for going into commission and getting his orders to report for duty at his patrol section at sea.

A bright morning with a nor'wester blowing greeted Nicky and his gobs a few days later, as they rose from their bunks to scrub decks and pipe mess gear. At eight bells the flagship made colors, and Nicky's young Q. M. slowly mastheaded that symbol of national majesty, the Flag, while he and his crew stood at salute, listening to the glorious bugle notes of morning colors floating out from the flagship's decks. Then, leaving his crew at brightwork, Nicky repaired, fresh-faced and rosy, aboard the flagship, to report the S.C.-1030 ready for sea duty. Somehow the fame of Q-19 had again gone before him, for that blithe craft, with her tall spars leaning under snowy canvas while the sea foam bathed her lee scuppers, led him direct into the presence of the admiral himself, instead of dealing with a coldly official aide. So, in due time, Nicky bulked into the admiral's cabin, standing on one foot with bashfulness, to receive a cordial welcome and kindly words from him whose word rules the destinies of the fleet. As one commander to another, so graciously did the admiral put Nicky at ease, the old sea dog sounded the depths of Nicky's seamanship and reliability for independent command.

"And remember, youngster," concluded the admiral at length, "it's just a great regatta, this patrol game.

You may have to run with the ball yourself some day—who knows! And I don't want you to ask me, then, what to do or how to do it. Do it yourself—and then wireless me you *have* done it! Use your initiative—just as you did when we in the Navy watched you chance that reef with Q-19 at Newport. Here are your orders—the service expects you to give a good account of yourself.”

“Yes, sir,” mumbled Nicky adoringly, backing his way out of the admiral's quarters. And that night the S.C.-1030 put out to sea, to report later to the S. O. P. of the patrol squadron off Hatteras.

A year passed. Even Nicky's best girl would have taken him seriously now. Her heart would have fluttered with pride to see men jump when he spoke. The sea had trained him. To face not one but a dozen Hatteras storms puts sternness into a man. To stand on a freezing bridge, hour after hour, and face the whip of gale-driven salt spray, while endlessly one huge comber after another towers over a frail deck; to pick a coastwise convoy out of the inky night and befriend her through the lonely wastes of a long sector; to endure weeks on end of patient, weary coast watching, with a hopeless *cui bono?* undermining the morale of officer and crew alike; to go nights without sleep and days in imminent peril of broken limb, while the storm slashes the patrol-boat's decks at every angle

short of total capsizes—these trials make bold the men of the sea!

Nicky learned that, when you see what appears to be three white sailboats going along in consort, they are most likely the markings on a camouflaged steamer, otherwise invisible; that a speck in the air above the horizon is not obviously a coastwise migratory duck, but very probably a patrol seaplane fifteen miles away; that an exploded "ash can" will stand such as the S. C.-1030 on her nose and will almost but not quite send her diving for the bottom; that a six-pounder is good for a man's head at two miles; and that machine guns, judiciously handled, can pepper and salt any given sea area into a white foam of bullet spats at two thousand yards.

These things are good to know, and along in May, '18, the kaiser sent over a fleet of his submarines to see if the men of the S.C.-1030 and her ilk really knew them. Reports of U-boat sinkings came down from the north, vessels done to death by shell fire far over the horizon, while patrol boats drilled before their commander in sham battle; steamers torpedoed and coastwise schooners sunk with bombs in their holds. And Nicky felt, with a joyful throb of his chivalrous heart, that since these foul deeds were being done up north, wondrous chances for advancement might come down his way, too!

More and more to the southward moved the S O S

calls and the sinkings. Made too hot for them by the patrol fleets of the northern coasts, with two of their number sunk by a destroyer and a seaplane, the raiders dropped southwards, where the sectors were longer, the patrol boats fewer, and the wastes of ocean more lonely. Off the Virginia Capes a steamer in the sector north of Nicky beat off a submarine by her own gunfire, while a S. C. boat nearly burst her engines trying to get into the fight in time. Nicky swelled with hope. The wireless was busy all over the ocean. The chances of his sector being next were *good!* Very good, indeed!

Came an oily morning, when the sea was as smooth as glass and a haze lay thick over the distances. A coastwise schooner lolled on the ground swell, her three dirty sails slashing idly across her decks. Nicky, patrolling his sector, stood listlessly on the bridge, pipe in jowl, a commanding thumb laid on one spoke of the S.C.-1030's wheel. One eye was cocked casually on the hump line in his compass binnacle, and occasionally, half asleep, he swept the empty horizon with his glass. Two of his gunners were cleaning bright-work on the six-pounder, while the two machine gunners lay asleep in the bunks below. Now and then one of his machinists would pop his head up out of the engine-room hatch for a bit of air, for it was boiling hot.

"The trouble with those people up yonder," ruminated Nicky, moralizing on the northern fleets, "is that they play the game too close to the rules. The

Hun pushes forward a checker and they jump it. He's always through with his dirty work before anyone gets there. It's all too cut and dried. Now if one of these little S.C.'s wants a Chinaman's chance against a Hun sub with a six-inch gun aboard, he's got to fool 'em—or else get blown out of water before his small guns can get in range. Initiative's the game—put something across on 'em——”

His soliloquy was interrupted by a muttered “*Je-ru-salem!*” from his quartermaster, listening in at the wireless down in the chart room below.

“What's up?” called Nicky sharply.

“S O S! Steamer to the south of us being shelled! She's coming this way, zigzagging for all she's worth!”

“Call all hands!” shouted Nicky, grabbing the wheel spokes. “Break out ammunition there, for'd!” Then, stepping to the engine-room speaking tube, “Full speed ahead!” he ordered. “Put on that third engine!”

The crew came tumbling on deck. Cartridge clips were fed to the machine guns, and six-pound shells and depth bombs passed up from the magazine.

“Take the wheel and head her *north*—for that schooner!” commanded Nicky to his astonished quartermaster, young Mr. Wright of Yale, who took the wheel, scarce believing his ears. Weren't they going *south* on a dash to the rescue? Turning tail was not the way they rushed to battle—not at Yale!

Nicky, offering no explanations to the questioning

eyes or the crew, went below and soon reappeared with some lanyard which he cut to three-foot lengths. He picked up a depth bomb and hefted it judgmentally. Then he tied lanyards to two of them, with an eye-loop at the ends, and then ordered two more depth bombs set in the trigger release astern.

Presently they sheered alongside the schooner and made fast. "Got a storm jib stowed below?" inquired Nicky of the wooden-faced skipper sitting idly at the wheel.

"Yep; tain't for sale, though," returned the coaster inhospitably.

"Three of you go below and break it out," ordered Nicky of his men. "Government's got to borrow it of you, my red-shirted friend," said Nicky cheerfully. "Show us where it is."

The skipper, after some argument and more exasperating deliberation, signed to his mate, who took the men below. In a trice they were back, dragging the sail. It was disreputable and ragged, but not dirty enough for Nicky.

"Souse her!" he ordered. Mystified, his crew dropped it over the side.

"Now spread her out—look alive, there! Don't be all day about it—show's coming off soon!" twinkled Nicky guilefully.

Grumpily, almost mutinously, his gobs spread the dirty, dripping jib along the schooner's bulwarks, and then, under Nicky's orders, they hauled its peak out to draw it over the S.C.-1030. Amid shrieks of pro-

test from the skipper, Nicky had a great rent cut in it to pass around the wireless mast, and then he made them drape the edges of the sail down to the water's edge until they completely hid the trig patrol boat.

"Looks like a duck boat camouflaged to a point!" observed Nicky, admiring his work. The crew sniffed scornfully. Hiding from the enemy, when their plain duty was to dash full speed to the rescue—Hell!

"You're a nice officer!" ejaculated the skipper, voicing the mute protests of Nicky's own crew. "Is *that* the way the Navy fights? You're sure yaller!"

"Shut up, you!" glared Nicky, facing him menacingly. "If you don't know enough to keep your yawp closed, I'll do it for you, and do it damn quick, see? There's going to be doin's here, right sudden, soon!"

Gunfire came over the horizon to the south. Then a smoke, and soon a white steamer, flying for her life, zigzagging like a hunted hare, while behind her puffs of smoke spanked out low over the surface of the sea. Nearer and nearer came the reports of the steamer's stern gun, as she vainly tried to reach the range of the pursuing submarine. In half an hour she had passed the schooner, and soon after, relentlessly as a rattlesnake hunting a rabbit, came the submarine, abreast of them, not over half a mile away, her long, straight sheer with its conning tower upstanding out of the sea, and a crew working like demons at her exposed six-inch gun, shieldless and naked on her forward deck.

"Now!" cried Nicky, "tear off that sail and cast her

loose! We gotta do it, boys, and do it quick! You at the machine gun clear off that crew! Full speed ahead!"

The starboard machine gun cut loose, and men around the exposed deck gun on the submarine melted away like flies. More dashed out of her hatches and tried to swing the gun on them, but shrapnel from Nicky's six-pounder wiped them into the sea. And the S.C.-1030 was dashing straight for her!

The sub commander gave up his gun as useless and started to submerge. He had no time at all to do anything, to so much as port his helm, for the S.C.-1030 was swooping down on him like a hawk.

"Drop those two ash cans on his neck as we go over, while I attend to these!" yelled Nicky, picking up one of the depth bombs by its lanyard. The sea was a boiling smother of eddies where the submarine went under, and over the whirlpool soared the S.C.-1030.

"Snap!" gasped Nicky, starting to whirl the depth bomb about his head by its lanyard, like a hammer thrower. The gunner released both depth bombs astern.

"Hard down your helm!" roared Nicky, as a white geyser of sea water rose behind them. The patrol boat's stern rose like a rocket, and at the same instant Nicky let fly the whizzing bomb in his hands. It soared out over the sea to port, a mighty cast, a glorious cast! Forty—fifty—sixty feet it flew out, in the direction the submarine was going when last seen. Then another boiling hillock of roaring waters threw

them on their beam ends. The S.C.-1030 rocked and careened under it until it seemed she never *would* right herself. Under full power she swooped in a vast semicircle, while Nicky, reversing his cast, hurled the other bomb to starboard.

"Four!" he gasped, grabbing the bridge rail as the S.C.-1030 rocked wildly again. "No matter which way she went, we got her! Anyone hurt?"

Gradually the sea resumed its glassy calm, while the S.C.-1030 circled about. A large slick of crude oil came up from below, and spread wider and wider over the surface.

"Busted her wide open!" declared the grizzled bosun, shaking his head solemnly. "Lay aloft there, and look for wreckage."

But nothing, not even a life buoy with the U-boat's number on it, came up to the eager watchers—one more sinking that would not be credited by the Pay Department for prize money, nor be reported to the newspapers.

But from the fleeing steamer's yard fluttered the bright signal flags, "Well done!" and from Nicky's wireless went this message to the admiral, "Bombed submarine in Sector 28. Credit schooner *Clara* with one new storm jib."

And, what is more, Nicky's original bomb-throwing idea became the parent of the Y-gun depth-bomb fire, by which a periscope sighted is a submarine sunk—the latest destroyer method!

THE DEFENSE OF DORONHA

CURTISS dug both hands into the locks of hair back of his ears and pored over the yellow aerograms spread out before him. The walls of the new wireless station reflected dimly the shaded incandescents on the sending and receiving desk, and no sound save the licking of the tropical surf on the coral reefs outside broke in on the after-midnight silence.

Curtiss was sorely perplexed over his duty in connection with those same messages. The wireless station of Doronha had been established for strategic and military reasons upon a lonely coral island two hundred miles east of the coast of Brazil. It was the nearest point of dry land to the European cable connections in the Cape Verde Islands, reaching in one relay the important naval bases of Gibraltar, Marseilles, and the German concessions in Morocco. A French officer of the line had arrived to take charge, but had as yet no formal orders to do so; the apparatus had been installed and the station constructed by an American company with Curtiss representing them as the construction engineer. But now the yellow slips in his hands demanded more of him than a mere commercial representative, for his patriotism as an American citizen was to be put to the test.

By 1917 the United States was the only world power not involved in the Great War. The fundamental aversion of the United States to militarism had caused our country to withhold its sympathy from all that the Prussian military caste represented, and this in turn had been deeply resented. We had seen all we wanted to of the pomp and glory of war in '61; to us all this seemed antiquated, out of date, childish; we could not be induced to approve. Our absorption of a flourishing South American trade that once had been a fond dream of the ruling caste in Germany stirred this resentment into activity. It showed itself not only in overt hostility to the United States, but in the fomenting under Prussian auspices of distrust and hatred of us by the very nations in South America which, under the Monroe Doctrine, we were bound to protect. Meanwhile the sea fight off Coronel had resulted in the defeat of a British fleet, followed by the secret dispatch of the battle cruisers *Inflexible* and *Intrepid* to reinforce the British squadron sent to waylay the victorious Germans under Von Spee at the Falkland Islands.

The whole of South America was awaiting the outcome with varied sympathies. No one in South America, except Curtiss, suspected even the presence of the *Intrepid* and *Inflexible*, so well had the military secret been kept. But that very day he had picked up certain mysterious communications from the German colonies in South America to the scout

destroyer *Blitz* that had convinced him that the Germans knew, and might even become desperate enough to try to seize the Doronha station summarily, for at least long enough to get a message to Von Spee, warning him. Thus Curtiss on Doronha found himself in a vortex of diplomatic difficulties. In the event of such violation of Brazil's neutrality, what should he do? Hold the station at all costs, as required by our own Monroe Doctrine; turn it over to Lieutenant LaPlanche, the Frenchman, as violated territory; or destroy it and make his escape to one of our cruisers? The Frenchman and he had become great friends, and he felt that, as LaPlanche was intensely jealous of everything that represented German influence, he could count on him for help in case he decided to hold the station. Then there was Hans, his German-American electrician; which side he would fight on was yet to be seen, for he had always been intensely sympathetic with the Fatherland's increasing influence in Brazil. Yet he, too, should give his life to the defense of the Monroe Doctrine, if America and her ideals meant anything to him.

LaPlanche and Hans were the only inhabitants of the island with him at present, all the workmen having been taken off by the last steamer that had touched there. Curtiss studied the situation without arriving at a satisfactory solution.

Suddenly the receiving galvanometer began to swing. It was of the new electrolytic responder type,

taking forty words a minute, and Curtiss translated rapidly, his eyes dilating as he grasped the full import of the words. Then the sending ceased, and after a short pause he acknowledged receipt, grabbed up the dispatch, and dashed into the sleeping quarters of the station.

"LaPlanche! LaPlanche! Wake up!" whispered Curtiss, quivering with excitement, as he shook the horizon blue-clad figure on the cot before him.

LaPlanche only groaned in the inflexionless cry of the dead-asleep, and his long, drooping French eyelashes shuddered as Curtiss bored into his ribs with his knuckles.

"Poilu! Wake up! Urgent!" he hissed into his very ear.

"*Nom du nom!*" growled the sleeper, turning over and opening half-conscious eyes. "*Dites donc—*"

"They're coming! Read this!" cried Curtiss hoarsely, waving the yellow slip. "Get up——"

Into LaPlanche's eyes shot the rapier-like glint that Curtiss had come to love so well. "*Tiens!* They're going to violate Brazil's neutrality, eh!" he exclaimed, now wide awake and all interest.

"Yes, us! The best military secret that was ever kept—yet somehow they found it out! They'll hit us like a steam engine. They're after *us*—America—over the heads of these two tropical republics. They're going to seize this station and warn Von Spee, in spite of *both* Brazil and America!"

"*Eh bien!*" snapped LaPlanche excitedly. "And that's your message, is it?"

"You bet! We *are* the war, just now—this little, lonely island of Doronha, two hundred miles from nowhere, off the coast of Brazil, and this wireless station that we Americans put in, and you, Froggy, are to command."

"That's all ri'. And now let's get back to bed. I thought you Americans were noted for *sang-froid*," taunted LaPlanche, slightly arching his eyebrows. "It will be at least a day of watching over our rim of horizon before we see a hostile ship."

"No. To-night! In twenty minutes! And we only have the one-pounder out in front of the station."

"*Ah! Mon Dieu!*" bantered LaPlanche sarcastically.

For answer Curtiss spread out some rumpled message blanks. "I caught these at five o'clock yesterday, just before dawn," he said quietly, "but thought it best to keep quiet about 'em. Hans, the electrician, you know——"

LaPlanche translated the messages. "Daily coal report in tons—*Scharnhorst*, 2,350; *Gneisenau*, 2,295; *Dresden*, 1,956; *Nurnberg*, 1,050," he read.

"The Coronel fleet—now not over five hours, steaming from the Falkland Islands—where the British trap is laid for them, you perceive! It's about 2700 miles from here, the limit of our night-sending capacity. The *Blitz* will have to get here quick if she's going to warn them at all."

"These are the German fleet coal reports, then?"

"Yes. Signalled, as usual, to their flagship at eight bells. And, as I caught them at 5 A.M., that places those ships somewhere about here," he indicated a point off the coast of Argentina above the Straits—"that is, twenty-four hours ago. I tell you it's the suddenest blow that ever was struck, and we are the blow."

"*Tiens!* and they must still be two hundred miles from the Falklands. Let's go to bed."

"Wait." Curtiss detained him. "Read this dispatch," thrusting the yellow slip before his eyes.

LaPlanche read it over good-naturedly. "It's from your consul at Rio, and simply says that reports have reached him that the torpedo boat *Blitz* left Guayaquil at 10 P.M. last night, and you are to prevent any landing or other breach of neutrality by a belligerent power."

"'Other breach of neutrality'—Hell!" echoed Curtiss savagely. "The *Blitz* will be here at 3:30—and it's three in the morning now."

"*O! La la!*" derided LaPlanche. "Shall we uncrate the shells?"

"Sure thing, and right now!"

"*Mais non!* If she comes to seize the station, all you have to do is to destroy the wireless and surrender yourself. You're still officially in charge here, so I shall not interfere."

"She's coming, don't you worry about that, and she's

going to land a party whether we like it or not!"

"Oh——?"

"Yes. You and I and those on that torpedo boat are the only persons in this part of the world that know of the whereabouts of the *Intrepid* and *Inflexible*. But they do know it—and Brazil's neutrality and the Monroe Doctrine be damned. What that torpedo boat is after is to seize this station, pick up their fleet, and give them the whereabouts of those battle cruisers."

"Still, if she comes, all you have to do is to warn your consul, destroy your apparatus, and surrender."

"No. My orders are to prevent violation of the Monroe Doctrine, and that means no landing parties and no use of this wireless, so long as an American is left alive on this island. Neither America nor Brazil can stand by and see the Germans warned out of that British trap by a message from South American soil—from a Brazilian Government wireless station. If we could only fix the wireless so that the torpedo boat would warn their fleet—too late."

"Impossible!"

Curtiss looked at him fixedly, turning a thought over and over in his mind. His eyelids drooped until the blue eyes shone through mere slits. "There is a way," he mused, "but we must fight for it. Will you? Your status as a French officer on Brazilian soil is—well, undefinable—but *will* you?"

"Ah, bon! Anything better than to rot here day

by day, and *ciel!*—grow fat,” yawned LaPlanche, stretching himself. “Pst! What was that?” he cried, suddenly straightening up and pointing through the open door of the station out over the sea.

“Where?” exclaimed Curtiss, following the other’s index finger.

“Oh, nothing but a wisp of red flame out there in the blackness,” said LaPlanche sardonically. “There it is again!”

“It’s her! That’s forced draft!” shouted Curtiss, grabbing up a hatchet. “Go wake Hans, while I run down and unpack the shells. He’s either got to fight or we’ll lock him up somewhere.”

Curtiss lit the cellar lamp, pried gingerly at the cover of the ammunition crate, and had started the first plank when a heavy footstep descended the stairway and Hans stood before him. He had nothing on but his washed-out, light-blue overalls. The bare muscles of his huge shoulders stood out in great, knobby bunches in the lights and shadows of the lamp, his general appearance giving no hint regarding his real technical abilities. Possessed of a university education and the thorough, analytic German mind, he had nevertheless, perforce, come to America and obtained employment as a wireless electrician—at double the pay he could earn in the Fatherland as an electrical engineer.

He stood silent, waiting for Curtiss to speak; his face, with its Saxon blue eyes, its blond mustache, its

wistful expression, never more in earnest than now.

"Hans," began Curtiss, looking up from the crate. "We are going to be two against the twenty landing from the German torpedo boat out yonder, but if they seize this station they will be violating the Monroe Doctrine—America's Monroe Doctrine, Hans—and you and I, as Americans, are going to fight to prevent it—eh?"

Hans nodded and shifted his weight to his other foot, concentrating his intelligent gaze on Curtiss's eyes.

"Now, what you care to do I leave entirely to your own sympathies, Hans, and to your' conscience. We sorely need another man, indeed we do—but—we're not at war with Germany—yet, and I wouldn't ask any man to—to—you know. Suit yourself; with us or neutral, this station's going to be *held*! What do you say?"

Hans made a deprecatory movement and again shifted his weight. "Mr. Curtiss," said he slowly, "I love the Fatherland; what man wouldn't? I know for why she make this war. Maybe she right . . . But America! Ah, America!" he exclaimed tenderly, the tears welling up in his eyes. "Mr. Curtiss, she take me cold, an' sick, an' hungry, she gif me vork, she gif me mooney, so I send for mein frau an' mein liddle ones. Mr. Curtiss, I—I—die for her gladly. Efry Cherman in America feel that way. It iss our debt."

Curtiss wrung his hand. "That's fine, old man,"

he muttered huskily. "America, right or wrong, for us! Bring up a dozen of those shells, old top—will you?—while I go get the canvas off the one-pounder."

He hastened out into the little green in front of the station, where the new one-pounder, with its naval base bedded in a neat concrete pier, pointed seaward. The torpedo boat was quite near now and coming on fast. Not a light was to be seen on her; only the hum of her draft and an occasional lick of flame out of her funnels told of her approach. Presently she slowed up and stopped, while Curtiss shoved in a shell and trained the gun on the dark mass.

"The moon will be up in half an hour. Oh, if I could only *see!*" he exclaimed anxiously.

"You will not fire now!" exclaimed LaPlanche, on tiptoe at his elbow.

"Sure!—Attack's the best defense. Any boat that comes up to this station with no side lights, no signals, ignoring all the laws of navigation, is hostile and ought to be fired on."

"*Alloo!*" A hail in German came in from the black bulk out over the water.

"Answer him, Hans."

There were a few shouts of parley. "He say you mus' surrender the station," translated Hans, "an' he goes to put overboard a liddle board."

"Tell him to get under way at once and show his side lights, or I will fire," commanded Curtiss.

Considerable shouting between ship and shore followed. "He say it is nonsense, and he call me a traitor," said Hans, his eyes flashing angrily.

"Well, there go his davits, and I'm going to open up the minute the boat comes around her stern. If I could only *see!*"

The three strained their eyes in silence as the noises of lowering and manning a boat reached them. The faint light, presaging the rising of the moon, slowly began to relieve the intense blackness of the sea.

"*C'est ça!*" hissed LaPlanche tensely, gripping Curtiss's arm. A blurred black shape separated itself from the larger bulk.

Bang!

"Too high. Missed him. Give me another shell," snapped Curtiss. Hans silently handed up another one.

"My friend, don't bother with the little boat, fire on *him*—he can't return your fire without wrecking the station," whispered LaPlanche.

"Froggy, old man, I love you for that thought. Here's for his boilers. Quick, now! Fast as you can hand 'em to me!"

Curtiss got off the shells as quickly as he could aim, landing one of them. The commander of the torpedo boat was equally swift to comprehend his predicament, however, and, taking the bow line of his gig, he rang for full speed and circled the point so as to be able to fire across the station at the one-pounder.

"Quick! Bring me some armor-piercers!" shouted

Curtiss, firing his shells as fast as Hans could serve them.

LaPlanche dashed below, while the torpedo boat stopped and took on the gig's crew.

"Now she's got us! Hurry, Frogs! She'll sweep this point in a minute."

A loud report echoed up from the bay, simultaneously with the deafening crash of the shell as it exploded directly in front of them. It was ear-splitting, terrifying, seeming to shake earth and air with its intense dynamic power.

"Now's the time to be economical of our army," said Curtiss jocularly, abandoning the gun and pushing Hans before him. "Here, LaPlanche, come back, come back—you're too late!"

Again came a belch of fire and smoke from the torpedo boat and again the driving crash of the shell. It seemed to transport LaPlanche into a fury of excitement. "*Oubliez '71—Jamais!*" he yelled, as he whirled open the breech, jammed in a shell and put his shoulder to the stock, driving home shot after shot as fast as he could crowd in the shells.

Crash! Another shell exploded over the gun, and there was a tang of steel as one of the guys of the tall aerial mast of the station parted.

"They won't try *that* again," panted Curtiss; "no more shells for us, LaPlanche! Frogs! He's down; come on out, Hans."

They dashed out and dragged the Frenchman back into the station.

"It is nothing," he expostulated, struggling to his feet. "A touch. A scratch. *Rien!* The force of it knocked me down."

They tied his left arm in a sling, while the torpedo boat fired slowly and steadily with both her fourteen-pounders, using solid shot which drummed past and out to sea across the point. The huge red rim of the moon rose over the horizon, bringing ship and shore out, black-red and sharp. Presently a solid shot struck the steel naval base of the gun, wrecking it.

"Now she'll get out a boat," declared Curtiss. "All hands down to the grove of trees along the shore back of the point. Where's Hans? Oh, Hans!" he called, stopping for an instant in the station to pick up his rifle. LaPlanche was already off, brandishing a French automatic pistol in his free hand, so Curtiss waited no longer, but ran after him into the dark jungle of ironwood and seaside scrub palms which bordered the mangrove swamp along the shore. Already the gig was pulling across the little bay.

"Now! The quicker the better!" he gasped, taking a rifle rest against a small palm.

"Ah! The Boche! After you, *mon cher.*"

Their shots rang out simultaneously, striking the water beyond the gig; whereupon a sharp command caused her to instantly dash forward, the six oars rising and falling like machinery. A seaman in the bow and two in the stern returned their fire as she came

on, while Curtiss looked anxiously over his shoulder for signs of Hans.

"Where, oh, where, is that thick Dutchman?" growled Curtiss, jamming another magazine clip into place.

The gig tossed oars about fifty feet off the mangroves and headed into the only landing place among them as the rowers snatched up their rifles. Suddenly a huge, blurry form trod out into the mangroves and stood motionless in the moonlight for an instant while those in the gig levelled their rifles at him. It was Hans. In another second a thin, sizzling arc of fire curved out from him to the boat, while the rifles aimed at him spit out their steel bullets. Then came a dazzling glare, a stunning report, a chorus of hoarse shrieks, and the water was dotted with bobbing heads amidst a few floating splinters and frames of the gig.

"Arnold von Winkelried all over again!" exclaimed Curtiss pityingly, straining his eyes on the still form of the devoted Hans lying under the mangroves. "Isn't that the Swiss of it, though, to sacrifice one's self for all! He must have fixed one of our shells into a kind of bomb. Poor Hans! Come on, Frogs!" he called to LaPlanche, in the jungle. "They got him, but they paid dearly for it, ten to one, I'll bet. Leave off potting those poor devils in the water; there's two of them that can't swim a stroke as it is. Let's get back to the station."

"*Regardez*; the other boat," answered LaPlanche, pointing toward the torpedo boat.

"All the better. We have a few minutes to think up something new, as they will wait for her to come up."

LaPlanche shrugged his shoulders. "*Eh bien!* There is still a good harvest of herrings below. But I'm all out of shells anyhow," he said philosophically.

"Well, France and Germany have had a crack at it; now let's see what a Yankee can do," said Curtiss as they reached the station grassplot. "Why, here, this thing's no bigger than one of those ancient petronels," he cried, kicking the dismounted one-pounder; "give me a shrapnel shell and some help around with it to the other side of the station and I'll show you what a Yankee can do!"

"My friend, she will kick your shoulder blade down into your lungs without the steel pedestal mount."

"Never mind, Hans knew how to die. I guess I can stand a little mule play. Help me carry the thing, old man. It's our only chance."

They unbolted the swivel pin and carried the gun around to the other side of the station, where it would command the grove of trees along the shore. Hurriedly they buried the piece in a low mound of cement bags and sand, while the noises of the landing of the second boat floated up to their ears.

"Now get down, Frogs," said Curtiss, slipping in the shrapnel, "we're to be heard, not seen, you know. That lieutenant's going to march his men abreast

through that jungle, and when they come out into the open——”

“*Eh bien?* You will be Chanticleer.”

“Raise the sun, eh?”

“You will raise the devil, *mon cher*,” corrected LaPlanche cheerfully.

“If we can only hold them till the sun does come up.”

“Ah——? You have a plan?”

“Why, don’t you know?—that’s all we’re after! We’ve just *got* to hold ’em till the sun comes up.”

“But, *Mon ami*—Pst! Here come the herrings!” The squad from the torpedo boat burst through the trees and formed in the open. Another sharp command, and they started to march across the little field.

“It’s like taking money from a blind organ grinder,” drawled Curtiss, bracing his shoulder against the firing stock and shutting both eyes.

Boom!

The shrapnel opened out with a sound of many rapiers swishing the air, mingling with the cries of wounded men, the scattering volley of the platoon, and the guttural shouts of their lieutenant, who angrily waved the survivors back into the jungle, disappearing immediately himself.

“Encore!” jeered LaPlanche, stopping the sputtering fusillade of his own weapon. “Those that do die of your goose gun, my friend, seldom or never recover. Six down, if I reckon right.”

“I don’t believe they’re feeling very well just now,”

gulped Curtiss, trying to smile; despite his efforts, however, the twitching of the muscles of his mouth increased.

"Hurt?"

"Yes—shoulder—help me—in to—station—old scout, will you——?" He fell over on his side, almost unconscious with the pain.

LaPlanche felt for the wound, locating a smashed collar bone, and then resignedly rolled a cigarette, paying no attention to the pattering fire from the thicket.

"Dawn's come, and this moonlight's half daylight already," he observed. "If I pick up the American and try to hobble with him to the station, with all those rifles in the bushes"—he shrugged his shoulders—"the defense of Doronha will come to an end *tout de suite*."

"Frogs—drag me—straight back—from this mound—keep down out of sight——"

"Inhuman! Drag you! Man, your collar bone's cracked."

"Do it, I say——!" Again Curtiss fell over and buried his face in his arm.

LaPlanche shrugged his shoulders and slowly began to work the grim, silent body toward the station, while the zipping chorus of bullets whistled over their heads. Soon a shout from the thicket and a bullet which clipped Curtiss's head told them they were discovered, and LaPlanche, picking up his man, dashed

around the corner of the building and in at the rear door, which he slammed and barred.

"*Mais non!*—but soon!" he gasped, as Curtiss staggered into a chair. The desultory fire outside kept on, but Curtiss hardly heard it. His wandering gaze had fixed itself on the metallic collar at the extreme top of the aerial mast, which could just be distinguished through the upper panes of the station windows. He watched the shiny metal, fascinated, curious incredulous of his own eyesight, as the minutes slipped by, for it appeared to glow and shine with a peculiar radiance.

"My friend," declared LaPlanche solemnly, returning from an observation at the windows, "this defense is almost *à fin*. They've brought up a cannon from the ship, and it's on the edge of the woods now. What are you staring up at?"

"Top of mast. Look! Sun! Never mind gun," gasped Curtiss, "they daren't fire it. Look—top—wireless—mast——"

"Ah! Ah! Sunlight! The sun!"

"Thought so; that's all—let 'em come."

"First this, though, eh?" questioned LaPlanche, aiming his pistol at the big wireless induction coil.

"No! Let it alone!"

"*Nom du nom!* Let it alone? What? You want to save their ships?"

"Put up your pistol!"

Crash! The main door was torn from its hinges

and driven in upon them by a rain of grapeshot, its fall simultaneous with the report of the fieldpiece on the edge of the jungle. There was a sharp shout and the squad of sailors charged across the field, dragging the cannon with them. They whirled it about in front of the door and took position.

"Quick! Wave handkerchief," commanded Curtiss, laying a restraining hand on LaPlanche's pistol, "set me down in doorway."

LaPlanche, wondering, mystified, did as he was bid. They made a ghastly group, framed in the black doorway of the station, Curtiss pallid and helpless in a chair, LaPlanche with his left arm in a loose white sling; both grimy and bloodstained.

"Congratulations; a most desperate defense," saluted the German lieutenant, standing beside his cannon with drawn sword. "Where are the rest of your men?"

"Here's all we ever had—except poor Hans," answered LaPlanche for the semi-conscious Curtiss.

"What—two!"

"We did our best. Are those seven all you have left?"

The lieutenant bowed stiffly and motioned to two of his men, who saluted and stepped inside to the sending table.

Presently the crackling signal sparks played at the wireless discharge. LaPlanche began to sob.

"Look, traitor!" he stormed, turning fiercely on

Curtiss. "*Voilà*—the doom of your boasted neutrality. What did you fight for, anyway?"

"Let 'em—talk, Froggy—let 'em talk," smiled Curtiss amiably, and again his head fell forward on his arms.

"Ah, bah! You should have destroyed your wireless when you had the chance. Do you know what they are sending now? '*Inflexible, Intrepid* at Falklands. Make all possible speed to escape southwards!'—For me, I'd rather be dead than sit here and listen to the answer to that message."

"I—want—to—laugh," choked Curtiss, grinning painfully. "There won't be any answer."

"What?" yelled LaPlanche excitedly, while the lieutenant frowned impatiently at the chatter in the hated English tongue.

"No—you and I—know something—about wireless—that this—young lieutenant—don't. They're warning—*nobody*, Froggy—can't reach Falklands now—too far off, and too late. Sun."

"*Diable!* I see. I'd clean forgot. Wireless carries only a third as far by daylight as at night. And our night range is but twenty-seven hundred miles! Talk, *mes innocents*," he whispered triumphantly. "Talk! Only the empty pampas of Argentina can hear you now! And that's why you held out till sunrise, *mon cher!* Ah—*mon Dieu!*"

THE HANDS OF THE CAPTAIN

NONE of us slept that night. The forecandle roared as though it were the inside of a boiler. It dipped and rose like a keg, and the talk would stop and all our hearts come into our mouths as the ship would poise for a sickening instant, to fall like an elevator and bring up with a shivering smash, while the rumbling fury of a wave sweeping the head drummed on the planks above. Then she would wallow, everyone wondering if this time she was going to the bottom, to stumble upward where the recurrent shriek of the gale screamed again through the rigging. The long lines of our white bunks, tier on tier, leaned and slewed at unbelievable angles; men gripped stolidly the sides of their berths, with a leg jammed into a corner of the one above; now and then a head would peer out, wild-eyed, or a hasty foot shoot over the bunk edge as if the occupant were about to dash out for his life.

For the most part we lay smoking, in short, feverish puffs, listening to the boom of immense waters buffeting the planks not a hand's breadth outside. Three old salts—Pa Barlow, our bosun, Jimmy Boyle, the Sails, and Red John, lately joined off a merchant bark—talked incessantly, their heads together (for the bench up in the peak. We lay still, smoked (for once

ignoring Smoking Lamp regulations), and listened. Anything to get our minds off the ship and her trouble.

"Ye can lay to this, Red," rumbled Barlow, poking the giant recruit in the chest with the muzzle of a stubby cob pipe, "a ship's three things: The hooker herself—and ye git to love her like a fine horse if she's an able one; us jacks, the crew, who likes each other, by an' large, but we all got to git along together somehow; and the Old Man, who I tell 'ee is th' Brrains, first, last, and all the time, an' don't ye forgit it!"

"True for ye! But, d'ye call this little, hookey-nosed boy an Ould Man?" snorted Red, his frowsty fringe of unkempt hair seeming to sizzle around a pickled face. "Look at 'im, squintin' through his sextant up there on the bridge, an' lookin' wise, but a murderin' ould woman for keepin' th' ship dressed, bitin' th' rail if there's the least thing out of gear—dom him, he sees everything! Called me down yesterday because I left wan loose yarn on a boat lashin'. He's too crinky for me! The Old Men I've shipped with is gray-haired, an' hard as nails. They don't mind a loose end or two, but they's nothin' on the 'tarnal seas that they don't know. Make us birds feel like a lot of looney landsmen when th' ship gits in a tight place."

Barlow's grim old jaw, with its stubbly gray growth over a pointed chin stuck out aggressively as he eased

against the downward crash of the ship, gripping the bench with hard hands.

"Ye don't savvy these 'Napp'lis fellers, matey. I've been shipmets with Betsey Blount before, when he was a skinny little midshipman on the ould *Santee*. He's one of them Navy Blounts. 'Father commanded the cruiser *Astabula*, in the squadron that was in the row off Cienfuegos; grandfather the frigate *St. Lawrence*, what was in the Monitor-Merrimac scrap. What *he* don't know, them grandfathers of his'n hand out'n a blue sky. He may be a bit of a martineet, but I've seen him handle the *Santee* in a gale of wind, mind you, like she was a dippin' lug-rigged pinnace. Ould Craven standin' by an' not sayin' a word—he didn't have to! Made me feel good, to see the young blood takin' hold like that, I tell 'ee!" He glanced down at the five hash bars on his blue sleeve, while memories of his Navy life on many seas seemed to flit through his mind. There was not much that could happen on the immortal ocean that our old bosun had not seen, we all felt.

"This ship's a limey, too—Gawd, how I hate limeys!" burst out Red, abandoning the captain for a new grievance, while the forecastle tittered.

"Meanin' she's able," put in Sails, who had been busily puffing and maintaining his seat against the roll of the ship by a grip on a berth side. "All limeys are able. I ain't got much use for the British, but I'll say they know how to build a strong ship."

"Good and able!" confirmed Barlow. "Me and Betsey an' a scratch crew brought her over from Bermuda. Gov'mint bought her for the Navy off some old Lord Glass-in-his-eye or other. 'Is warship liked his steam yacht square-rigged, look ye. Lots of them old codgers still do. C. & R. wanted to take the yards and sticks out of her when we brought her into the yard, but there was no time to more'n put on her guns an' give her a coat of gray paint and a dock trial before th' orders comes to clear out an' go on patrol. The Old Man was pleased as a kitten over them yards they left him—he's a sailorman before he's a steam skipper, ye mind—so Sails, here, he overhauls the gear, and Betsey strings his wireless where it won't be in the way none."

"Is you claimin' that them sticks of ourn is anything but ornaments?" demanded Red belligerently. "Hain't I seen 'em? Jest play toys, little dinky yards for some old Sir Eagle-beak to set in a fair wind and play he's a admiral—that's all they amount to!"

"Avast!" cut in Sails. "That's man's gear, matey! Them limeys give her spars and cloth that's strong enough and then some. That's Number One flax, man—no cotton yacht gear, an' ye can lay to that! It's all we've got, if anything happens to the ould kittle."

"Aw!" came an incredulous laugh from one of the upper berths. "You old shellbacks die hard, I'll say!" A head and arm appeared over the berth side, as a

fresh-faced young electrician looked over to join in the discussion. "Say, if anything happened to the engine, how long d' you s'pose before the Old Man would shoot out a wireless, and a couple of destroyers 'd come racin' out of Portsmouth after us!"

A howl of approbation went around the forecandle, while the three old seamen cursed all us naval reservists collectively. Everybody felt relieved as the little row gathered headway; and, to help along, a shirt dropped out of an upper berth and went swimming about in the water swishing across the floor.

"Gow-ding it!" yelled the exasperated owner. "It's a dorg's life! We men'll get hour rights, some day, Hi'm tellin' ye!"

He poked up cheekily out of his berth, a little sallow Cockney, with narrowed black eyes. Everybody laughed, for "Slimey" Halloran's Bolshevik views constituted an unfailing "sketch" in the forecandle.

"*All* right!" he squeaked. "You blighters can laugh! Some day they won't be no orficers to come bullyin' us comrades around. Don't we run the ship? What do they do, but stomp 'round an' give orders? They ain't one of 'em what'll so much as pick up a rope's end. Look at what our brothers is doin, in Roosia, boys!"

Catcalls overwhelmed him, and some one threw a shoe. The diversion was interrupted by the forecandle door banging open, and with it a skirl of spume forced its way in and wet all the bunks. The newcomer

breasted the door shut. His blue shirt was sopping wet and his cap jammed down over his ears.

"Gawd, what a night! Boilers is foamin' somethin' turr'ble!" he ejaculated, as we all looked at him inquiringly. The red branch mark on his sleeve and the white propeller over three red chevrons would have told an outsider that he rated machinist's mate, first class.

"Old kittle going to see her through, Link?" asked the electrician encouragingly.

The tall youth shook his head dubiously. "I dunno. Had three water-shots off the boilers on my watch. I jumped for the bye-passes and let live steam into low and intermediate—just in time, beli've me! Thought the heads would be knocked out of her! Relief valves about as good as so many sniffers. A fellow can't *always* be right there, about an engine room. Two of us at the butterfly, one at the ram, one man oiling, life lines stretched in front of the cranks—'s a mad-house back there! We're running on dogwatches. Paine's got the engine now."

A sudden silence fell on the forecastle as all hands listened. Above the howl of the storm, the faint *Tink-tink! Tink-tink! Tink-tink!* of the ship's bell came down from under the bridge outside, like the squeak of a wind-tossed ghost.

"Gosh! Six bells! It'll be our watch in another hour, boys! Le's all try to get some sleep."

It was Joe Roat, the seaman gunner, who spoke. Just

off a farm, he did not know enough about the sea to worry. He could hit anything with a rifle as far as he could see it, so it had not been long before he rated the white target on his sleeve, a pair of crossed cannons, and gun captain of our for'd three-inch rifle. He rolled up in his blankets again. The rest of us kept quiet, to help him out, but the pipes went on puffing and a low mutter kept up between the three old shellbacks on their peak bench.

Immediately the incessant clamor of the gale penetrated through the bulwarks into the forecabin again. Hideous imprecations screaming through the rigging; fury, awful and unending; the boom and hiss of monstrous seas pounding the deck; the yell of the storm, higher and higher, lowering a second to come on worse; and through it all the steady thump of the engine laboring aft.

"Gee, it *can't* blow no harder!" wailed a voice, breaking the tense, listening silence. The storm seemed to answer with a yet more monstrous shout.

"Shut up, you; temptin' the devil thataway!" growled some one, "It's bad enough—Gawd! What was *that?*"

A terrific racket had broken out aft. Through the iron plates of the ship it was being telegraphed forward to us, the wild clash of metal on metal, rapid as the blows of a flail—then silence, and the screw stopped and our electrics went down.

Link Hart dashed from his berth and was out of the

forecastle in a flash, slamming the door behind him just in time to stop a sea. Blue shirts waved drunkenly in the air in the dying red glim of the lamps as they were frantically pulled on, and almost immediately the ship began to roll like a barrel, racking from side to side with dizzy swiftness. Men were thrown headlong out of their berths, to land on the wet floor and grab convulsively for the berth sides and hang on. Outside, the thin squeal: *Ou-wee-wee-wee! Ou-weeeeee-ou!* of the boatswain's mate's pipe drifted to us, calling, "All Hands!"

We tumbled out of the fore-castle, to be met by a roaring sea that shipped over the quarter and swept us all in a spluttering heap against the low engine house. We seized its handrail and hung on shivering, while the streaming suds swept our feet to leeward. The backwash burst into our fore-castle and gutted it. Barlow made a flying run to slam its door and got back just in time to hang on, while a second cataract engulfed the engine house, shooting up in a flying spray over its tight skylight.

A voice boomed out, harsh as brass, through a megaphone over our heads:

"Lay—aloft—port—watch!"

It was Lieutenant Betsey Blount, U. S. N., taking charge himself. At a time like this his three reserve ensigns counted as but one of us.

"Come on, ye domned hayrakers, d'ye want to live forever!" yelled Barlow at us, jumping for the shrouds.

We followed him, a little knot of forlorn-hope humans pinned flat against the screaming shrouds by the merciless tempest. At lulls we would creep up a ratline or two. We did not let ourselves think what it would be like up there on the yards. Link Hart came crawling up amongst us.

"Ow, she's a wreck!" he wept. "Water-shot from the boilers hit the high-piston valve and busted the rod—she knocked herself into heaps before they could stop her. Wireless M. G. all gone, too. They'd oughtta let us clean them boilers——"

"Up forestaysail! Close-reefed foretopsail! Close-reefed mizzen topsail!" bawled the megaphone, the gale whirling the words out into the night. Sending men to their death perhaps, there was a man's man behind that voice! Somebody knew what he was doing, aboard this lunatic-tossed ship. A surge of response leaped up in our hearts, and, as one, we pushed on up, the shrouds narrowing, the companionship of our fellow men dropping below, the grip of the gale and the wild swing of the mast becoming greater with each upward step. We reached the top. We crept out on the swaying futtocks. As a giant seesaw the yard dipped nearly to the lashing foam below, rose like a walking beam, and hung us, clinging to the jackstay, over the seas to windward.

"Port fore brace! Port cro-jk brace! A hand on the starboard braces there!" rang out Betsey's megaphone below us.

We could see them slopping waist deep through the welter down there, tailing on the port braces, a couple of men clinging to the rail while casting off the weather braces with a free hand.

"Haul!"

The familiar pipe was silent. It had been tried and found wanting in the shrieks of that night! The stentorian tones of a man were the only thing that would ride that gale.

The yards braced around sharp as we dug into the bunt for the lowest reef points. Barlow and a couple of mates lashed fast the earrings while others cast off the gaskets and they went streaming off into the night. Back astern below, a gaff rose slowly, the spanker snapping pistol shots, and then it suddenly stopped as its rag of canvas set and the ship swung to the wind. The narrow point of a jib rose jerkily up the forestay, bucked a time or two, and then filled, steadying her head. Meanwhile the wind, the mighty, huge, irresistible wind, had whipped the furled foretopsail out of our hands with a clap of thunder. We hugged it with our arms, we sat on the yard and hooked the bunt between our legs, we fought and cursed at those reef points. Each one was a separate struggle. To starboard the wind snapped the bunt out from under the taut clews and hurled Red John off the yard like a jack-in-the-box. We all gasped, as he hung with an iron grip on the clew, while his legs whipped about in the wind trying to find the futtocks. He came down

in them with a jump that shot the man in the next bight up to his knees.

"All reefed, sir!" bellowed old Barlow, at length, through cupped hands, shooting his voice down to the bridge.

"Foretopsail tyes! Fore tack! Away clew lines!" yelled the megaphone. Oh, boy, that was some Old Man! We thought that he was really glad that the old kettle was done for and we had a good square-rigger under us.

The foretopsail fell away below us. Inch by inch the corner of the tack crept down to its block, the malignant wind tearing at it and shaking it like a rat. The lee sheet block streamed out in the wind, fluttering, vibrating at the end of its canvas, rattling in the spectacles like an electric buzzer. As it was hauled home the sail filled and we could feel the ship below us sending to its drive. She foamed along, and our wake was a broad white suds that streamed out astern into the night.

"Glory, boys! We've beaten the mizzen top, anyway!" shouted Barlow, as we gathered to punch each other with congratulatory relief. The thing was done! There was sail on the ship.

"Mizzen lifts and clews! Mizzen sheets!" came up to our ears gratefully as we derided and catcalled impotently across space to the mizzen.

"Lay down, the foretop!" And then, later, as if

conceding its due meed to discipline, "Well done, men!"

That was the last we heard of Betsey for a time. He still paced the bridge, his officer's rain cape ballooning out in the gale, but his orders came through Mr. Taine or Mr. Burroughs, the ensigns of the deck. As we were now on watch ourselves and the starboard hands below, we huddled in the lee of the engine house, enduring the wet seas that boarded us as best we could. Dim lantern light shone through the shut portholes of the engine house, and from inside came the sound of hammering, as the engineer division tried to repair the junk heap. But we didn't care about that—wasn't our ship a noble old girl though! And wasn't she making it handsomely, under those narrow strips of canvas up on our yards!

"I tell ye, boys, the Old Man's orders is Portsmouth, an' Portsmouth he'll make, if he has to come in with only the rags a-standing! What do you think of him now, eh, Red?"

"Not so lubberly, for a kid!" growled the giant. "But this ain't nothin' but a capful of wind. You oughtta seen *us* goin' around Good Hope under bare sticks! Not a domned rag on her but the storm try-sail. Le's hev a real blow, says I."

We reservists wanted to murder him. There *couldn't* be any more wind than this! No one spoke. We all squatted, shivering, gripping the engine-house handrail while the water on deck swirled around our

shoetops and raced overboard through the scuppers. The house was low, but at least it sheltered us from the direct smash of the seas. Two bells clanked. The Old Man was up on the low poop astern now, with a quartermaster steering by the emergency hand wheel. Over the gunwale we caught faint suggestions of light to the east, and the horizon, as we glimpsed it on the roll, seemed closed in to a narrow circle of hungry seas.

"Dawn comin', boys," muttered the bosun, shifting his cramped position to look, "and—hell's bells, look what's comin' with it!" he whistled.

We craned our necks and peered. There seemed to be something over to the east, something huge and without form, but big and ominous. Our eyes could not shape it, nor give it length nor height.

"Squall cloud comin', a whopper! It'll blow the sticks out of her!" prophesied Barlow bitterly, "Damn your eyes, can't you fellows see anything? I'll bet the Old Man does."

He did. "Port watch aloft! Look lively, now!" cannonaded Betsey's voice at us. We jumped to our feet as Mr. Burroughs came charging amongst us. "Hurry, men! He wants the fore and mizzen goosenecked. We got to move before that thing hits us."

He raced to the shrouds with Barlow at his elbow. We waited not for lulls this time, but fought up with frantic haste. We poured through the lubber hole and stamped our way up the narrow foretopmast shrouds,

for a menacing roar that rose even above the tumult of the winds drove us. It came nearer and nearer, as we lay out on the yard. A knot of the watch below were tumbling out of the forecastle and running up on the head with Mr. Taine leading them, hurrying to get down the staysail. It collapsed, fluttering without noise in that gale and came shriveling down as the squall hit us like the brutal smash of a fist.

It was unbelievable, that wind! Our breath was rammed down our throats, our eardrums bulged in with it, our hands moved as if through glue; there was nothing for it but to hang fast to the jackstay with a leg crooked over the yard and try our dangdest to get the sea gasket around that sail.

The ship heeled to it like a noble horse overridden. She wallowed her lee rail under, driving it down, down, down. We could see it foaming under the sudsy water like the side of some great fish. A huge wave raced for her, snarling with foam, and she staggered up its side. We seemed on top of the world for a moment, and within reach of a gull who screamed *Hi! Hi! Hi!* overhead. Another wave smashed her under the counter and tripped her, so that she reeled down drunkenly, her masts dipping, dipping.

"Hang fast, boys—she's going over!" screeched Barlow, dropping his ball of sea-gasket rope, to twine himself around the yard.

A huge one, with a glassy green side like a greenhouse, curled over and smashed down on deck. The

ship yelled, in a quantity of noises of things going adrift below decks, and rolled over on her side. The watch below slid into the slop to leeward, and the officers on poop and bridge grabbed for stanchions and hung fast. Betsey's megaphone pointed up our way.

"Cut—away—fore—sheets!"

It was his last desperate order. We could reach neither of them. The lee block was already under water and our yard pointing to the sky, with the weather block up there like a ball on a flagpole. Red and his men came sputtering up the futtocks, hand over hand, while we dropped down with Barlow, to join them, clustered about the foretop. Down below—or rather across the sea from us, slantwise—pandemonium had broken loose.

"Cut the sticks! Cut! Chips, where's your axe?" screamed voices as the watch hauled themselves up the steep deck by the weather gear which had fallen off its pins, and tried to lash themselves under the poor shelter of the weather rail. The ship's deck slanted like the roof of a house and half of it was under water. The seething backwash came up to the base of the funnel. Heroic doings were going on down below, as the engineer force plugged up the ventilating gap around it and fought out the water from cowls and door hatches, we learned later. The top of the funnel just cleared the lee wash of the waves. It shipped water occasionally, but no steam came out,

showing that the chief had had the prudence to haul his fires long since. Meanwhile the ceaseless yells to cut away the shrouds and let the masts go came up to us. We saw Chips creep along, ducking under the seas that swept over the weather rail, an axe clutched in his fist. No one whimpered, but it meant the end of us.

Then came Betsey's voice. "No!" he boomed. "The first man that touches those shrouds, I'll shoot!" He stood on the slanting poop, one knee and an arm crooked around rail and stanchion, the seas breaking right over him, but the automatic in his hand was levelled at poor Chips, who dropped his axe as if already shot. "Not—not cut, sir!" he faltered, unbelieving his ears.

That little shrimp Halloran leaped for the axe, where it had fallen against the engine-room topsides. "Don't listen to 'im fellers! 'Aven't we hour rights! Cut the domned sticks and let her right herself! Look out, there—I'm comin'."

He jumped for our shrouds, axe in hand. We despised him for his insubordination, but were resigned to be let go by the board if it would save the ship.

"Let him cut, Mr. Blount—don't mind us!" Barlow yelled for us all.

"No!—Halloran, drop that axe overboard. Drop it, damned quick!" The Old Man's gun stopped dead on him. Halloran turned and bared teeth at him like a rat. He cursed and snapped, but his shaking hands

released the axe, and it dropped into the sea as he stood gibbering and blaspheming at the captain.

"Somebody shut him up, there!" shrugged Betsey, turning to look up at us. "Ahoy, aloft! All there, Barlow?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" we all yelled.

"Stay right where you are until ordered down."

"Cripes!" came Barlow's astonished mutter. "What d'ye s'pose is his idea! I'd hev cut her free, meself."

Some one had handed Halloran a backswipe that sent him snivelling in a heap over the engine-room skylight. Minutes went by, with the ship still on her beam ends, the watch hanging to rope ends, while showers of snow drove horizontally over us and the seas washed up her bottom and slid in cascades over the rail. We could have walked down the ratlines.

It all seemed unreal, an undreamed-of ideal, the rigid Navy discipline aboard that capsized ship. All those men, their lives, and that of the ship herself hung in the hollow of one man's hand; depended absolutely on the orders that were in his mind. It was not Annapolis that was on trial—that mother of admirals had produced thousands and thousands of master seamen! It was Betsey, backed by Annapolis, who was combating the limitless ocean, single-handed. A little hookey-nosed boy, as Red had called him, he stood there, rigid, immovable, minute after minute, his eyes watching the ship, hardly lifting to glance anywhere else. The sun came up, and its slanting rays

glinted under cold clouds on the shiny black visor of his cap. His hooked nose, flattened in some football scrimmage, was running tears of salt spray and it jutted down under the visor like the guard of a helmet, the face of the fighter that knows but one battle cry, "Don't give up the ship!"

None of us had the least idea what he would do next. Even Barlow declared that he'd be blown if he knew what *to* do. The ship was tight, and she would not sink under us. She would come up, when the wind got through, whenever that would be!

"Leadsman to the chains!" barked Betsey suddenly.

"Look at that, now! Wants to know where he is!" crooned Barlow delightedly. "Th' boys'll get bottom for him, somehow. I bet he hov th' whole domned bottom chart in his mind, bless 'im!"

Jim Hawkes, a seaman, first class, of the starboard watch crept forward to the abandoned bridge and climbed to its high weather end. He untied the coil of lead line, but beyond him stretched the smooth shiny ship bottom with no chance whatever to heave the lead. Betsey waved him forward to the bowsprit, where he knelt out on it, with one arm down around the stay, the waves seething around him at every pitch of the wallowing ship. The lead swung in a big circle and plopped into the sea.

"By the mark, ten!" he hailed.

"Bring me the bottom," came back the order.

Carefully wrapping the lead in his handkerchief,

Hawkes pocketed his precious charge and made the hazardous climb back to the poop. Betsey examined its armed bottom critically. He seemed startled for a moment, and we thought we saw his eyes glancing about over the sea anxiously. Then came an unexpected order:

“Lay down your men, Barlow.”

“Now, what the——” grunted the old man. “Ugh! Better be up here than down with them birds on that wet engine house! Come on, boys, lively does it!”

We crawled down on all fours, the seas lashing up at our legs as they reached the chains. It was all turmoil down here, with the risen sun smiling coldly over an ink-black sea, and white Niagaras curling over and thundering down on the ship’s smooth bottom, to spout up in showers of spray that drenched us. The Old Man, we noticed, now divided his eyes between his stricken ship and the misty wrack to leeward, peering through it for longer periods, sometimes, than he devoted to our drowned masts and the varying strength of the gale. We all looked when he did, for down in our hearts every man was thinking the same thing but dared not whisper it. Betsey finally borrowed glasses from one of the ensigns and looked to leeward more intently than ever.

“Good God, look there!” groaned Barlow, pointing westward with a soaked arm that flapped wetly in its blue regulations. A murmur of despair went up from

the whole ship. We all saw it simultaneously—land! Faintly discernible through the haze, and the ship drifting on to it, helpless. Never did we hate the land more than then! It seemed shrouded in tumbling white mist; and then we shivered as we realized. It was awful! That land was a wall of rocks, with the great waves spouting high over it! We could visualize our finish plainly: one terrific smash, cast headlong in on the slope of a wall of water that would hammer with ten thousand, thousand tons of force on that immovable granite; once more, in the surging backwash, her iron keel broken and every plate buckled, to come down with her side crushed in like an eggshell and those of us still alive tumbling out into the boiling seas; once more—and we, with tossing rafts of wreckage, would be hurled to our deaths on the pitiless rocks by the pitiless sea.

Betsey straightened himself with a quick jerk of resolution.

“Wear ship!” he thundered.

“Wear ship, sir! What with?” sang out Red John disdainfully, as we all wondered if the Old Man had gone crazy. She wallowed awash in the smothering seas, with every sail doused, except the two topsails which stuck up out of water, fluttering wetly, like the wings of a capsized aeroplane.

“*Silence!* Up jib and foretopmast staysail—smartly, men!” bellowed Betsey, glaring down at us.

Mr. Taine, Red John, and a bunch of forec'l' hands leaped forward, hand over hand along a life line that had been stretched under the weather rail.

"Aback, fore and mizzen yards!" came the next order, to us this time, the lashing tones ringing like an iron quirt about our ears.

"The lee braces are fast under water, sir; we can't get at 'em," quavered Barlow. "Shall I dive for 'em?"

"Never mind. Stand by!" and before any of us could get our numbed bodies nerved to the act, he had jumped down amongst us and dived down the slanting deck into the sea. A suds of bubbles came up, and then an occasional burst of them; then nothing, while we picked at our shoe laces and made ready to go down after him. We hardly noticed the white flutter of the jibs jerking up the stays in the tense suspense of that moment. Then he came up, ten feet from the ship and drifting away fast. A rope's end shot out to him with the quickness of thought, and we all blessed old Sails, whose presence of mind had got it ready.

"All gone the lee braces!" choked the captain, as we hauled him in with an eagerness that nearly drowned him. "Haul the weather braces, men, rouse 'em along the engine house and put your backs into it! Give the ship a chance!"

He clambered, soaking wet, up on the poop, his eye at once on our half-drowned jibs that rose white out of the sea.

"Is she paying off?" he shot at the helmsman.

"Going, sir—fast!" Her head spun around, the bowsprit slithering across the wave tops and rising steadily.

"Heave, men, heave on those braces!" he stamped at us with blazing eyes. The yards came slowly around as we heaved against those drowned sails as if our very souls were in it. They stood aback at a sharp slant as she swung around, and the wind slapped into the canvas above water with a resounding *Pong!*

"Belay!" he warned, as the full pressure of the gale came on them. Barlow's heavy shoulders lurched as he made a sudden catch around the pin. The rope groaned. We all held our breath lest it should part. The blocks clucked, but the sails held and the ship began to move like a derelict awash. We seemed the center of a whirlpool of tumbling waves. She labored like a raft, with whitecaps pounding down on her from every direction and rebounding against each other to spout up into tall geysers of spray. Down along deck the deep blue water began to eddy and curl as it passed astern and drifts of suds came steaming to the surface.

Then the wind, getting a bigger lift under the yards, literally tore her masts up out of water. The ship jerked to her feet like a horse scrambling from wet asphalt. All the water brought up with the deck deluged over us, knocking us sprawling into the scuppers and cascading over the bulwarks. We came up

sputtering and clutching at each other, to find white waterfalls of water running overboard everywhere and the ship leaping to her stride as a mare from its haunches. A great sea came rolling up after us, curled high overhead and deluged down, sweeping the deck. We hung to grab-irons, ropes, legs, anything, until it was over; but it was the last, for she leaped away from the next one, and none of them could catch her after that. We found old Barlow, spitting and coughing sea water at the lee rail, with the last of our lee brace in his hands and a turn of it around the pin. He had grabbed for it in all that smother of sea water, at the last possible moment.

We started to haul it in and steady the yard, but Betsey was not through with her, for there lay the land, looming up not five miles away and dead ahead.

"Square those yards! Quick! Square 'em!" he stamped, cursing us in expletives that bit and goaded us to frenzied action. We heaved and hauled like madmen, gaining rope an inch at a time against the frightful wind pressure.

"Now, then—port your helm! Port!" he yelled at the helmsman, although the quartermaster was not five feet away from him.

"Port 'tis, sir!"

She came grandly up, the sails snapping volleys as we rushed for the braces.

"Belay jib sheets! Brace the yards sharp!" the order caught us, as we hauled away for dear life.

The sails filled again and she hung, leaning over, and then steadied as she buried her lee rail and drove on, clawing off shore. Our wake was a great half circle, whose remnants still lay scattered over the tumbling seas. We had come in perhaps a mile in wearing her out of water, but we still had a good offing. A rocky headland jutted out some three miles to the north, with reefs and a spouting rock out to sea beyond it, but, if we could claw off for that much distance we were safe, for beyond it there would be sixty miles of bight before we would sight the accursed land again, and then there would be a harbor, Portsmouth.

It was three miles to the shore and four north to the headland: could she make it? Her drift was appalling; but good ship, gallant ship, how our hearts were one with yours in that fight for life!

We were kept busy at the pumps and draining water out of the lee cutters which had come up full of water; some of us went aloft to secure loose ends of gear that had gone adrift; others coiled down ropes and hung them on the pins, watching our fate, approaching swiftly, with uneasy eye. Again we were all, ship and men, in one man's hands, and that man stood like a statue on the poop deck, eying the chances to leeward, nursing the helm with a quiet order, getting the bottom from the leadsman up on the bridge—not a man of us would have traded jobs with him, then, for any inducement in the world!

It looked to us as if she would make the point hand-

ily, but not that spouting rock, unless by an act of God. She could not go inside of it, for the line of reefs. Everyone stopped work, as we swept down toward it in long, tremendous swells, over which the ship raced her bowsprit like a blooded filly with her neck stretched out for the goal.

"Ah, look a' that, now! The pity o't! The pity! Good—God!" wept Barlow softly, as the distance lessened to cable lengths, then yards. "She'll not make it. We'll strike! Save us—the Old Man's headin' dead for destruction!"

It seemed as if he were going to ram us right on that deadly thing as the ship swooped down. Surely Betsey could have clawed off another inch!

"Slack off jib sheets! Helm hard a-port!"

The jibs flapped suddenly, as the ship shot up into the wind in a long scend.

"Sheet Home! Hand-some-ly! Home! *Home!*" yelled the captain. The forecastle worked like devils, catching her with the jibs before she went in stays. The ship hung not fifty yards to windward off Spouting Rock, payed off, and fell away—beyond it!

A great bellow of relief went up all over the ship. We danced, we punched each other, we clapped one another on the back as if we had done something. *We* had weathered Spouting Rock!

"Square all yards!" bellowed Betsey,—and there was grim laughter in his tones this time,—and with a shrug of his thick shoulders he went below, leaving the deck in charge of Mr. Burroughs.

Like a woman gathering up her skirts and running for it before a shower, the ship soared into the deep bight of the bay. Land was nowhere in sight ahead, but in two more hours we would pick it up again—and a blessed breakwater, behind which we could furl our wings and swing in peace to the old mudhook.

The bell clanged four quick double-strokes, and the pipes of the bosun's mates suddenly came to life.

"Port watch below!" they called.

"That's us, boys," grunted old Barlow, rising to stagger with the wide gait of a seaman toward the forecastle. We went inside and wrung the water out of our sopping blankets. The other watch hadn't been in yet. Their side was all below water when we were on our beam ends, and all their mattresses were in one sozzling heap, Chips reported.

"I'm lookin' for the man that says our Old Man ain't the best Old Man that ever trod a deck!" quoth old Barlow, advancing an aggressive chin within an inch of Red John's face. "We're just his lubberly hands, I tell 'ee!"

The Hercules glared down his nose. "Hain't neither!" he vociferated. "We're a lot of bloomin' brothers, from him down to that squeakin' apprentice boy that stole my socks, when you come right down to it! And I'm goin' to bust your nose!"

And they went to it like a pair of hens.

LIVE BAIT

A SUDDEN deluge of bright light flooded the captain's stateroom of the destroyer *Ransome*, painting the cabin's steel walls with shimmering splotches of sunlight reflected from the waves outside the porthole. Lieutenant Commander Seaton Elliott, her captain, rolled out of his berth and attempted to brush Pokey, the ship's cat, off his lap. "That's the *Pitié*, I reckon," he yawned, stretching the sleep out of his limbs. Pokey agreed, purring amiably. She was not only a green-eyed black cat, which any sailorman will tell you is especially lucky, but a hump-backed cat as well, thereby becoming an especially potent mascot, and getting more than her share of the condensed cream of the wardroom mess.

Elliott, with an "Ouch!" of exasperation as he brushed Pokey's sharp claws out of his trouser legs, jumped to the porthole for a look-see, for the sudden illumination of his cabin could mean but one thing, a ship near by, and a white ship at that. Two cable lengths away he perceived the hospital ship *La Pitié* coming to anchor in the roadstead. She was named for the French hospital of that name in Paris, the Red Cross having run out of English names connecting mercy, solace, and the like. Always graceful and yacht-like, her tall topsides were a blaze of pure white,

with a huge red cross, reaching from water line to taffrail, painted on her amidships. Every man in the fleet had a warm spot for the old *Pitié*, for she used to bring mail from home when on foreign station, bundles of month-old newspapers and fresh stores. Now she no longer doled out the squadron's mail and took over their sick. Instead, white-robed nurses were promenading her decks and hanging over her rails, for during the Great War the Navy had turned her over to the Red Cross. Elliott watched her out of the porthole, memories of times when she meant solace to homesick hearts floating through his mind.

"Ho-hum!" he yawned, stroking Pokey, who was rubbing against his legs. "Fat assignment, convoying a boatload of Fluffy Ruffles! What next?" he grimaced whimsically. "Might as well board her at once and deliver that packet of orders to the head nurse. Best broadcloth uniform, of course, when calling on a femme."

He broke out the festive raiment, with its brilliant gold bars and stars, went on deck and called away his gig. A short row across the harbor chop, with his ensign fluttering astern, and his crew landed him at the *Pitié's* starboard gangway. The officer of the deck met him and escorted him to the bridge, where he and her captain went over confidential details of the coming convoy, after which he felt free to seek out the head nurse.

"Down that companionway," directed the deck officer mysteriously, as indicating a region where no mere sailorman might dare to tread.

Elliott went below. The old *Pitié* had not changed much from the original passenger-ship plan as a coast-wise vessel, for long white corridors greeted him, dividing her 'tween decks into innumerable staterooms where once had trod the feet of fashionable ladies and happy children. At the foot of the main staircase Destiny awaited him, for, seated at a small table—Elliott stopped in his tracks, stricken witless at the sight of her! A vision, in nurse's white regalia, with red cross on arm brassard, sat demurely at the table guarding the precincts of the hospital. Elliott gasped, and his heart stopped within him. He hesitated and stared awkwardly, almost rudely, at her loveliness. Brown eyes, under long, curving lashes, searched him inquiringly, while little wisps of shiny brown hair persisted in distracting a masculine eye, required under regulations to be fixed impersonally on that becoming headgear which is the Red Cross's principal recruiting attraction. Her pretty lips parted to ask him his name and business.

"Oh, I say! It's a crime to spring a thing like this on a mere unprotected male!" thought Elliott, as he still gazed, struggling for breath. "L-Lieutenant Commander Seaton Elliott, of the U. S. Destroyer *Ransome*—to—to see Miss Armwyth," he managed

at length to stutter out, to the entirely composed and inwardly amused fair one.

She demurely wrote his name and rank on a little slip. "Third aisle over; then four compartments toward the back of the ship," she directed, handing him the paper.

Elliott took it and went on, dazed. "Gosh!" he fetched a mighty breath. "I suppose the fellows ashore are always running into world beaters like that, and so get sort of used to it; but, say, Hot Sport! How about *that* to serve your cream of wheat regularly every morning! She's got *me* hanging to the ropes!"

He strode on down the corridor, joyful that he was only twenty-seven, the youngest three-striper in the Navy, and unmarried. All naval officers look imposing in Uncle Sam's gold stripes and stars. This one, for once, paused before a panel mirror to take an unwonted observation. The image reflected back at him was of a typical sea dog, stocky, sturdy, weather-beaten and pickled from five years of sea duty in the Madhouse Service, the torpedo-boat flotillas. Stern blue eyes, eyes that commanded, glinted from under bushy reddish brows, and above them rose a high, domed forehead, shiny and sunburned, to the top of a prematurely bald head.

"Hell's bells!" he gurgled at himself. "In Memoriam Seaton Elliott, skipper of Uncle Sammy's yacht

Ransome! 'He thought he was skirt-proof, but a rag and a bone and a bunch of brown eyes flushed him and brought him to earth!' " he grinned, thinking of the fate of an Annapolis classmate who had fallen for some soulful eyes judiciously maneuvered.

His papers to the head nurse were soon delivered, and, after a few minutes of polite small talk, he retraced his steps.

"Any officer rates the right to spoon on a dazzler. Here's where I flash her a smile and crab off an eye-ful!" thought Elliott, relapsing into Navy as he sped down the corridor.

Dangerous game, at which mankind is a mere novice compared to the least of the predatory sex! She of the desk sent him a bewitching look and a sidelong nod as he went by, and the commander, routed, fled over the side with his head cloudy with roseate visions. Presently his gig was scudding across to the destroyer, where the business of getting her ready for sea soon engrossed him.

A little further down the roadstead lay the flagship of their convoy, a big armored cruiser, camouflaged in glaring stripes of white and sky blue. Beyond her, two hulking transports, painted cubistically and crowded with brown-clad soldiers, tugged at their mooring chains. It was a very small convoy, as convoys go, just the cruiser to guard the two transports, and himself to take care of the hospital ship. The

time was September, '17, and Elliott knew what that meant, particularly when they would reach the submarine-infested waters of the Devil's Hole off the Irish coast.

"Hope those nurses have good sea legs, or whatever is the Red Cross term for it," mused Seaton. "Hang it, anyway, Navy is no language to think of skirts in! If I don't get Her out of my mind, this packet will never be shipshape—and we'll sure have weather!"

An afternoon of battening down hatches, double lashing everything that might be smashed adrift, breaking out his torpedoes and ammunition crates for the three-inch semi-automatics, and answering the continuous string of orders fluttering from the yard-arm of the flagship, kept Elliott a busy skipper, but by nightfall the *Ransome* was ready for sea and his thoughts reverted again to the white-clad angel at the desk. That night, under the stars of an Indian-summer nor'wester, the convoy slipped out of the roadstead, the big cruiser leading, with only her screened speed light showing, followed by the two yawning transports, and then the destroyer, with the *Pitté* tripping along in her wake, while Elliott, watching her, hung looking backward over his bridge rail, still dreaming.

A week later the convey was laboring across the

wastes of the Devil's Hole, an area of the sea a thousand miles wide, where the Gulf Stream and the Arctic currents meet, beginning about fifteen hundred miles west of the Irish coast.

"Fine young weather!" grinned Elliott cheerfully at his second and clinging by main strength to the rails of his corner of the bridge.

"'S a regular night-blooming swizzle!" returned the ensign, making a mad snatch at the binnacle standard as the destroyer rolled to her beam ends. "July or January, the Devil's Hole is always on the job! We'll roll over on our back and kick up our heels presently."

Huge chops rolled hither and yon, blown by ceaseless storms; mountains of blue-black sea water slashed along the decks of the transports, buffetting their prows to the anchor gear and wallowing over their stern turtle decks in Niagaras of icy brine. Now and again long hillocks of ocean, higher than the cruiser's basket masts, rolled on broadside to, and the gale whipped off the entire tops of them, hundreds of tons of hurtling brine, and a deluge would pour down on her superstructure. Even on the high battle bridge, where Elliott could make out her officers and quarter-masters facing the storm, shivering in high-collared greatcoats, it was a freezing misery for the whole four hours of their watch. But, to Elliott and his destroyer, the Devil's Hole was a mad existence, every second fraught with danger to life and limb, while

ceaselessly the sea had to be searched for lurking periscopes. There was no thought of eating or sleeping during the whole crossing of it.

"The old U. S. S. *Roll-sum's* doing six seconds to the roll, I'll bet!" laughed the ensign sardonically. "Here comes cookee with the chow. I'm Mess Gear's right-hand man when it comes to shoveling down bullets and sowbelly! This way, stranger!"

A can of cold beans, served with a hatchet, was proffered when Finnegan managed to pilot it up on the bridge, and Elliott and his second dug the contents out with a couple of spoons, thankful to get the utensil to mouth between grabs at the nearest fixed object.

"Sleeping is simple aboard this packet," gulped Elliott between mouthfuls. "I just pitched my mattress out on the floor and turned in on the wire springs last night. Wore the old felt lambies, too, regular soggy sponge of pickle, but I was too tired to take 'em off. Braced my knees against the high side boards of the berth and dozed along with a viper grip on the grab rails to keep from being pitched out bodily. Makes you wish you were section boss of a gang of bluejackets back in old Crabtown (Annapolis) again, don't it?"

"You warbled something there!" chortled the ensign hilariously. "The engine room's a madhouse, too. The boys just sprawl over the hot turbine casings when she rolls, and one fireman holds another around

the waist while the holdee pitches a shovelful at a time *at* the fires! At that, they are thankful that the old days of the reciprocating engines are over. 'Member, Seaton, the little old boats of the *Porter* class, how you got pitched bodily into the cranks if you didn't grab like a monkey at the life lines? At least our greaser gang can't more than get scalded by the turbine casings."

"Some blow!" growled Elliott. "Almost too bad for subs." He crooked an elbow over the rails and searched the seas with his binoculars. "'S my guess they'll be taking it easy about fifty feet down in this weather."

To just keep alive on a destroyer during a storm occupies most of one's attention, but even through the maelstrom of the Devil's Hole Elliott could never forget his vision of the pretty nurse on *La Pitié*. Ashore a man constantly sees beauties that knock one cold at the mere sight of them, but their faces are soon supplanted by others just as pretty. It is far otherwise afloat, where a sailorman rarely sees a petticoat; one face like that will burn into a man's memory and reign there supreme. Elliott could not get the picture of Her out of his mind. She became a veritable obsession with him, and he clothed her image with all the impossibly adorable attributes that man is wont to hang around the shrine of his beloved. During the calm reaches of the Newfoundland Banks, when all the nurses were out on deck, he had often ranged the

destroyer alongside the *Pitié*, just hoping for another glimpse of her. Several times they had exchanged salutes, but usually tipping his hat to her from the bridge had drawn a whole broadside of fluttering handkerchiefs in return for the salutation meant for Her alone!

The whole company of *La Pitié* regarded him as their gallant protector. It was pathetic, the confidence of that shipload of women in him, when he alone knew what he was really faced with. To guard that boat through the black hours of the night, when men's eyes ran with pus from straining them over the inky seas, searching, searching for the sinister eye of the pirate periscope—he alone knew how faint was the chance of mere human eyesight against the diabolical cleverness of the Hun.

Along the eastern side of the Devil's Hole ran the line which the German Admiralty marked as the area within which every ship found was to be sunk at sight, and this included also hospital ships with their precious companies of heroic women destined on errands of mercy to their own as well as their enemies' soldiers. For five long days and five double-long nights the convoy had battled its way over the heaving tumult of seas. But now, where subs were apt to be more frequent, the cruiser and her troopships changed their tactics. Both camouflaged so that they were indistinguishable as to which was fighting ship and which transport, they separated a league

apart, putting an enemy submarine in a quandary as to which to attack. But to Elliott there was no course but to stick as closely as possible to his charge. *La Pitié* rode like a white swan, visible for miles, now buried behind the seas so that only her masts stuck up over the hilltops, now sailing high on a wave crest, her flaming red cross a mark for any miscreant. Near her wallowed the destroyer, shooting up a hillside of foaming water, wiggling to her beam ends as she went over the crest, and hurling her crew helter-skelter across her decks before plunging down into an abyss, where she would bury her bow deep into the side of the next wave. Elliott grew so used to seeing a huge wall of sea water towering above her and about to smash down on their devoted heads, that to grab and hold fast, cowering into the hood of his felt Eskimo suit while the deluge of brine swept over the whole bridge, became mere second nature. Only a few adventuresome nurses braved the wind-swept decks of the *Pitié*, but up over her bridge canvas peered the caps of her watch officers, anxiously scanning the seas through tireless binoculars.

On the last night of the Devil's Hole, the sun set wanly under an angry bank of clouds, piled billow on billow to the far western horizon. Elliott, with eyes running salt tears from periscope strain, swept and swept the waves, more and more carewornly as night came on. At any time, out of any one of them, might come Fate, heavy with doom. Even now, over their

heads might be fluttering the wings of the Black Ravens!

And then it happened. From nowhere, without the slightest warning, a rending tearing crash came to his ears across the dark waters. With a white flash of explosive, a huge geyser spouted up out of the sea amidships alongside the *Pitié*, a torpedo-shot in the very center of the holy sign of the Red Cross! The destroyer was thrown hard on her beam ends by the backward wash of the explosion, sending Elliott spinning across the bridge to land in a heap against the port railing. But he hardly noticed the incident for the agony that tore at his own heart. He had failed! That shipload of confiding women—where were his eyes when the assassin had launched his fatal thrust! No excuses are accepted aboard ship; either you do your job and get away with it, or you don't. And the Hun had got her. Already she was listing heavily to starboard as he drove the destroyer, bow-first, toward her. All her people would have to be taken off in that storm and there were an hundred and twenty of the nurses alone. Voices, thinly veiled in sarcasm, assailed him from *La Pitié's* bridge. Like a culprit, he bowed obedience to her reserve officer's commands, and maneuvered the long destroyer as close to the hospital ship's wildly thrashing gangway as he dared. She now heeled far over, turning up her bulging bottom, and the gangway went down her side at a

crazy angle, the platform at its base smashing the seas at every roll. Like a file of well-drilled soldiers, the nurses had already lined up on deck, clinging to the rail, while sturdy seamen, braced in the gangway ropes, made a chain of safety for them to descend.

"I'm putting eighty of them in the four port life-boats," shouted the *Pitié's* skipper through the storm. "Can you take forty of them aboard the destroyer?"

"Aye, aye, and pick up the rest as soon as we clear your ship! Send down the first ones lively!" bel-lowed Elliott, as, with both hands on the pair of engine-room telegraph handles, sticking up like rabbit ears from their brass standard, he backed first one turbine and then the other, nosing in the destroyer's bow as close as he dared. A knot of his strongest seamen had gathered on the destroyer's billboard, and one by one the nurses jumped for their arms, while the two big ships battledored and shuttlecocked the lashing seas caught between their two hulls. It was wild work; great spouts of sea dashed up and showered over them; time and again the *Ransome* seemed about to be crushed under the huge bilge of the *Pitié*, but, backing and going ahead, Elliott stuck to his telegraph handles, managing the destroyer with consummate seamanship, while at each dash another white-robed woman was shipped aboard and sent aft.

Finally the captain crept down the gangway, bade his ship good-by and leaped aboard, to come running aft. "Magnificent work, commander, magnificent

work, sir!" be beamed, climbing up on the bridge. "Tough luck, old man, but we all did our best! The Hun was too cagy for us that time!"

"I'll never forgive myself, just the same," returned Elliott grimly. "With your permission, sir, we'll run around to port and pick up the rest of your boats. My people will all bunk out any old place on the boat, and there will be room below for all the women."

"All right, make it so, sir," agreed the *Pitié's* captain. "Good-by, old girl!" he muttered huskily, straining his eyes at the abandoned and sinking hulk of his ship. "Lord, what a dirty trick!"

"They're a disgrace to the naval profession," echoed Elliott. "If the good God only gives me one fair crack at that inhuman beast!" He swung the destroyer to port, and, with both searchlights going, the lookout picked up the first boat. Ordinarily a destroyer cannot stop for one moment to board such a castaway, because to do so is to offer a target to the lurking submarine, but this boat fairly slid down upon them, racing stern first down the slope of a wave, her people battling madly at the oars merely to keep her head to the wind. A fierce grapple with ready boat hooks, and the *Ransome's* crew had her lashed securely alongside, where she rushed onward with the wash of the destroyer, her load of nurses being swiftly hauled up on deck by their wrists and the boat then abandoned.

All night Elliott searched the waves for the other three boats, and at intervals picked up two more. At

daybreak he was still on the bridge, searching the foaming seas, fighting against the hopelessness of a hundred-to-one chance. Deep down under the despondency over the loss of the *Pitié* and the wear and worry of the rescue, lay a growing conviction that became more poignant every hour. His Girl was not among those rescued, and therefore must be on the fourth boat! He would have recognized her unforgettable face in a thousand nurses, and not one as they came aboard could have been she. To make sure, he had looked for her carefully when, relinquishing the bridge to his ensign, he had gone below to see that all the ship's quarters had been turned over to the nurses and that everyone was as comfortable as it is possible to be on a destroyer. Nowhere was she on the ship; of that he was certain.

The destroyer was now alone on the ocean, for the cruiser and her transports had hurried away as soon as wirelessly that the *Pitié* was being attacked. Elliott felt it his duty to cruise in search until the last ray of hope had been extinguished. By the end of the day, when too exhausted to stay awake longer, he curled up in a corner of the bridge and went to sleep in his Eskimo suit, with Pokey, who had stuck to him through it all, curled up in a ball in his lap.

On the second day they were still patrolling the area, and the sea had abated somewhat, for the influence of the Gulf Stream was beginning to be felt. Elliott awoke with a rotten case of periscope eyes, his

granulated eyelids gummed fast. He jumped up, brushing Pokey off his felt oversuit, where she clung with her claws dug into the thick felt. "Scat! You're a punk mascot, you are!" he exclaimed irritably. "First you lose us our convoy; now you're going to make us report twenty-six people missing. Get onto your job, dammit!"

Then he picked up the cat and stroked her forgivingly. "Never mind, you black heathen," he whispered into her fur. "I'm like a Chink mess boy beating his idol for not bringing him good luck. You just find us that fourth boat and all will be well!"

He pried open his eyelids and resumed his binoculars. Finnegan, the cook, came up on the bridge with some hardtack and a cup of black coffee which he had managed to heat up by incredible sleight-of-hand. Elliott downed it thankfully and went on with his watch. During the day the wind shifted and freshened again, until by night it was blowing a gale. Not wishing to run out of the possible area where the cast-away might be, no doubt by this time drifting moored to a sea anchor of lashed oars and gratings, Elliott hove to and wore out the night in about the same position, making four knots to compensate for storm drift. Again he slept fitfully on the bridge, with a slicker and a wad of blankets thrown over him in a corner of the bridge, while again Pokey shared his warmth.

The next morning the boys all looked pretty hag-

gard, for every hammock had been turned over to the nurses, and for two nights they had slept curled up around the guns and under the torpedo-tube mounts, in crannies in the engine room, a lot of them in the warm coal bunkers, whence they crawled out, a mass of dirt and coal dust. Elliott felt bitterly that the time to give up the search had come. The live bait would be dead by this time. Seventy-two hours in that storm would finish any boat crew from exhaustion and thirst alone. Even the sub would have abandoned her by this time and gone about her sinister business. So long as the bait stayed alive, waving pathetic antennæ of sailors' shirts and Red Cross aprons lashed to upright oars, she would hang around, circling with pitiless eye, waiting for the rescuing destroyer. But dead bait was no good; even a patrol boat would pass it without stopping long enough to make a mark for a torpedo.

Heavily he gave the order to abandon the search and bear away to the southeast. "Good-by, Sweet-heart!" he whispered, looking across the waves through unwonted tears.

The day's routine of the ship was resumed, and with it returned to cognizance the ceaseless roll and grab for rail and stanchion, the endless climb up one foaming wall of water and plunge down the other side. Most of the nurses were sleeping in the hammocks below, or enduring life in their crowded quarters somehow, but a few of them had managed to

come on deck for a breath of fresh air. Elliott encountered the head nurse, sitting on deck, her arm around a three-inch gun mount for security, her face lined and haggard from care and hardship.

"Good morning, commander," she greeted him sweetly. "This is the first opportunity I have had to thank you for your heroic work in rescuing us all," she smiled up at him as he balanced heel against foot on the slanting deck.

"I shall never forget, or forgive myself, for permitting you to be torpedoed," said Elliott. "And for not finding that fourth boat, too. I deserve to be court-martialed, and will be most likely. The service doesn't want excuses; it wants results."

"No! They won't! Surely they will not court-martial you!" exclaimed Miss Armwyth incredulously. "No man could have done more than you did. I'll testify to that with my last breath! I'm afraid though, we've lost Miss Webb, and nineteen of our girls besides, to say nothing of those poor sailors. Her people will never forgive *me*, either."

"And who is Miss Webb?" inquired Elliott, sensing that he must be hearing the name of his Girl. "We haven't given them up, even yet, you know, but are taking the track that they undoubtedly would take, southward to the transport lanes, where they may run into a convoy."

"Miss Webb is the daughter of Josiah Webb, of hospital fame. You may recall the name. She was

my executive; a beautiful and talented girl, my own particular charge, as I am quite intimate with her family——”

“Boat ahoy!” the hoarse hail came croaking down from the lookout cage.

Elliott jumped for the bridge. “Where away?” he yelled up through cupped hands.

“Three points, nor’ one quarter east! Just got a glimpse of it over the horizon, captain,” shouted down the lookout, peering over the edge of the cage. “I’ve lost her now; but you put me over thataway an’ I’ll pick her up again sure.”

The *Ransome* heeled over as she made a quick swoop to the north. Over the seas she shot, her turbines singing a high-pitched whine as she threw on her full twenty thousand horsepower and dashed at full speed through the roaring seas. Nothing but the sharp edges of mountains of water filled the ocean before them, a sleet of wind-flecked foam covering their steep backs. Miles passed. Then, appearing for just one instant on the crest of a comber, was a tiny cockleshell of a boat, with one oar still sticking up and a flutter of white from its top! It disappeared into the hollows and was not seen again, but the destroyer was aimed for the spot, and Elliott knew it would soon reappear. Then they saw it mount a wave half a mile off, and the *Ransome* slowed down, for it would not do to pass at full speed because of the powerful

wash of her engines. Now it was but a few hundred yards off—dragging from an improvised sea anchor.

Poor live bait! Not a living thing moved on it, not a human being raised a feeble arm to wave a welcome. Even yet the Evil Eye might be lurking around, and Elliott dared not risk his ship and all on board to stop for one instant. At half speed the destroyer swooped by, and from the top of a wave looked down into the lifeboat, careening further along down in the trough below them. White-clad bodies lay sprawled on the thwarts. Here and there the blue jacket of a sailor showed, and one of these was moving, raising a feeble arm. The destroyer rolled down into the hollow, and Elliott's straining eye made out Her, lying in the stern sheets, in a huddle of pitiful white forms. Her great dark eyes looked out at him tragically as she tried to raise her head. He could see that the women were still alive and that they were trying to raise a faint cry, but the sound was lost in the roar of the wind. Elliott, mad with anxiety, not daring to attempt a rescue, steamed around them in a great circle, searching every inch of water for a periscope.

Then a messenger came running up on the bridge, from the officer listening below at the audiphone. "Be careful, captain, there is a submarine about!" he announced. "We can hear her screw. She seems to be bearing about 27°, 34' south, sir."

"We'll drop a can on her bean, then," declared Elliott energetically. "Quartermaster, set her east-27-south."

He dashed over and dropped several depth bombs judgmatically. The submarine's screw stopped, but that might not mean anything reassuring; most probably she was just playing possum, still lurking below, waiting. Waiting until she heard the destroyer stop—and then!

An hour passed. Still the sinister silence kept up. Had he sunk her? Or was she merely waiting, around the bait? No oil had come to the surface, and in that sea a slick would show up instantly.

Sailors are not superstitious, but they believe in black cats, particularly hump-backed ones. Elliott, in desperation, picked up Pokey from where she rubbed around his legs on the bridge. "Pokey," he whispered, stroking her sleek back, "give me a hunch. Shall I chance a stop, or shan't I?"

Pokey purred amiably, but the hunch did not come. In a black night, when no one can see anything, destroyers are run mostly on hunches, but this was broad daylight, and, in an agony of dilemma, he bore down on the boat for the third time. The appeal, the sight of all those hollow eyes, those forlorn, miserable faces, those gaping tongues bespeaking unutterable thirst—they were almost too much for him!

"Pokey—think of something, dammit!" exclaimed Elliott, exasperated. "I'm going to stop her if you

don't!" He eyed the black cat expectantly, with a sailor's trust in his mascot. Suddenly he lifted his head, as a light of understanding flashed into his eye. "Black!" he gasped. "That's the hunch! You black demon!" he laughed. "You inky Satan! The smoke screen, of course! I'll screen her!"

He shot the destroyer off to windward and issued the necessary orders. Living clouds of dense black smoke poured out in thick rolling billows from the destroyer. The wind whisked them off to leeward and spread the murk far and wide over the waters. A veritable fog of impenetrable clouds filled the wave hollows and whipped over the sharp backs of the combers. Into it the destroyer raced, for her work must be done swiftly before the wind swept the screen away. Peering through the smoke, they made out the white bobbing hull of the lifeboat. Elliott grabbed the telegraph handles and the turbines came to a stop.

Slowly, warily, the torpedo boat drifted down on the castaway, her ready crew hanging out over the rails to drop a man aboard with a rescue rope. Everyone on lookout searched the smoke-covered waves with anxious eyes. Just as both boats were rising swiftly on the back of a huge wave, the wind whisked the screen away, like a veil torn from a blindfolded face, and there, not a hundred yards off, leered at them the conning tower of the Hun submarine!

A torpedo shot out from her bow tube. It was

aptly timed, right at the moment when it would ride high, and it came roaring straight for them, its exhaust spluttering like an aeroplane as it shot out of a big wave to plunge into the side of the next. It was a sure hit, and Elliott, horror-stricken, sighted its wake and judged that it would strike them some distance forward of the bridge. The *Ransome* was three hundred feet long, and it was practically impossible to back her clear of the torpedo, but instinctively he grabbed for both telegraph handles to signal, "Full speed astern!" The ship rolled viciously as he jumped for the handles—and his foot trod on Pokey amid a riot of feline squalls, throwing him completely off his balance. His body swung, twisting his arms, and, in spite of him, the port handle pulled back to full speed astern, while the starboard handle shoved over inexorably to *full speed ahead!* The effect was magical. Ten thousand horsepower swept a boiling mass of foaming waters forward along her side like a mill race; the other ten thousand drove a roaring column of wake bodily astern, while the destroyer swung like a top—swung out her bow to meet the oncoming torpedo—swung across its track not fifteen feet in front of it—swung clear of it altogether! And the deadly missile hurtled along their side and passed harmlessly on astern!

"Snap!" barked Elliott down the speaking tube to the gunner in charge of his bow torpedo tube, for his own bow was now aiming directly at the Hun. A

jar shook the destroyer as her torpedo launched out. Elliott regained his foothold and stopped both turbines, to steady her for a second shot. He could see the long, bubbling wake of his torpedo as it soared with incredible swiftness, straight and fair at the diving submarine. Down deep, well under the surge of the sea, it kept on its way. There was a tremendous explosion, pieces of the submarine, periscopes, conning tower, and sections of deck rose in a confused, boiling mass of fragments. There was no need for the second torpedo!

Elliott grabbed up Pokey in an ecstasy of joy, amid the frantic cheers that arose from the destroyer's decks. "Pokey," he whispered into her shining fur, "you don't know what a good little kitten you've been to me today! With you horning in to help, kitty, we beat the Hun—and we've saved my Girl!"

THE PLAIN PATH OF DUTY

THAT giant machine, the Silent Navy, has thousands of cogs, each intimately interlocking with the others, so that the work of each man furthers that of the man ahead of him. The result is patent to the world, in that grim, irresistible Power which forever protects our homeland shores from those who would do us harm.

One of the cogs had broken, and there was a gap . . . It was a pathetic funeral, in the small brown-stone church in the town where had been spent the boyhood of Junior Lieutenant John Hastings, U. S. N. R. The Stars and Stripes hung in broad folds over the narrow box that held the mortal remains of this cog in the great machine. That was his sole glory, the one distinguishing mark from a plain civilian. No dirge of military music, not even a marine guard from the navy yard to fire the last salute over his grave, for the flu had been quick, and the reverberations of war were still in the air, and there had been no time for the commandant of Hastings' distant district to notify that of the district in which the funeral took place.

Pathetically small, too, was the representation from all his hosts of friends in the church. A smattering

of naval officers and seamen, a handful of relatives hastily gathered, a few old friends of his boyhood town, were all that filled a few of the forward pews. His cousin, Sam Hastings, senior lieutenant, U. S. N., stood grim and silent at the head of the front pew on the left; his brother, Commander Hastings, headed the family to the right, while beyond them stretched a short, straggly line of officers and seamen hastily summoned from active duty. From the organ loft came the solemn measures of that well-beloved hymn, "There Is a Green Hill Far Away," carried by the one soprano and the tenor that could be reached in time. To Sam, it seemed that never had the old tune sounded so poignantly beautiful as in that rich duet, supported by the organ alone. A choking surge of emotion swept over him as his eyes glanced at his old comrade, Lieutenant Sloan, beside him. Old Iron-face was crying, actually crying, his face distorted with grief, and Sam's own muscles twitched, too, in spite of him. The funeral services had been supportable until now, but that music! The salt tears rolled down, unheeded. This was the end of Man; that little black box, with Old Glory's protecting folds draping over it. This was all! The end of bright hopes, of a future big with promise; the end of comradeships, mutual labors in the Navy's work, the end of everything—at twenty-seven years of age!

The gap would be hard to fill, for Lieutenant John Hastings had been a highly efficient cog in the Navy

machine. On his shoulders had fallen the motive-power repairs and upkeep of a whole navy yard. Dozens of ships owed to him their ability to keep the sea; none left the yard for patrol or overseas duty without his efficient hallmark all over them. So much would he be missed as an officer; as a man still more so, for the yard would never forget his genial presence, and his vacant chair at mess on the receiving ship would require considerable of a man to fill, in the estimation of his shipmates.

The little procession filed after the pallbearers, following the coffin out of the church. Many dispersed at its doors and went back to their lives, but the Navy followed on to the cemetery, to be with poor John at his last resting place. Not a word had been spoken among them, but as one they had paired and marched in a grave procession behind the hearse. When the last dust had been returned to dust, Sam turned to his old comrade with wet eyes.

"Poor John!" he gulped. "We—we were children together in the nursery! I—I suppose it's up to me to carry on his work."

Sloan regarded him with astonishment. "Why! Aren't you going to ask for your release? Mine's gone in already—the war's over, old man; it's time we got back to business."

Sam shook his head dubiously. "It's not quite clear in my mind what I ought to do," he answered. "We Hastings are Navy people. If we aren't in the Navy,

we're in the fleet reserve, ready at all times to be called on for active duty, on combatant ships. We are regulars, as much as if we were on duty in the service. When you naval reservists get out, you're through. It's not so with us; my duty is to carry on;—the Navy is short-handed as it is. Who is going to take John's place?"

"Not you, surely!" cried Sloan incredulously. "With four children, and a consulting engineering business that is known from one end of the country to the other! You can't afford it, man, not on Navy pay!"

"There is no 'can't' in the fleet reserve, it's 'must.' That's the way John would feel; and so do I," retorted Sam grimly. "I'm going to forget the release, and ask for transfer to his work at the yard. It's my duty!"

"But your boy, Sam!" objected Sloan earnestly. "He's got to go to college, now or never. And your girl, coming out this year! And your wife—isn't two years of scratching along somehow enough to give, now that the war is over? We've done our bit, old top; when they want us again, let them call on us," urged his old friend practically.

Sam visualized Sloan's release application coming into the Detail Office at Washington. He could see it being signed with a sigh of regret, for Sloan, too, had been a mighty cog, an efficiency expert who drew more pay than three admirals in his own business, and

to whom the Navy had owed the speedy output of destroyers and sub chasers that had ended the war. The Silent Navy would say nothing: but sign the release, for it was honor bound not to hold a naval reservist, once the armistice was signed, if he asked for a release. But a fleet reserve man! A former officer of the service; Class I, for active duty on combatant ships! What would they think of him?

Then temptation assailed him. He was forty-two, and drawing a kid's pay as senior lieutenant in the fleet reserve, while his confrères in the Navy were all captains and admirals. He saw the evening of his life spread out before him, the future of his whole family blighted if he stayed in; his boy forced to seek work instead of being seen through college and started on his life equipped with a liberal education; his daughter—what would she do without the social advantages that money can give? And his wife doomed to poverty, after years of comfort due to his earning power as a citizen. It was they who would suffer. Nobody would care, least of all the Navy, to whom a man is but a name, a cog in the machine. senior lieutenant? Ah, yes, some youngster, is this name, here's a nice, minor job for him, where he can keep out of trouble! So much for the country-renowned engineer's fame, in the Navy!

Sam took a last glance at that brown mound of fresh earth, and the die was cast! What is patriotism but sacrifice? And what impels certain ones of us to overturn the slow accumulations of a lifetime, home,

business, and standing in the community, to forsake them all and give ourselves to the protection and service of our fellow countrymen, but patriotism? And does patriotism cease with that emergency which we call war? Does it not, rather, impose the obligation for service as long as there is national need? His cousin had given his all for that ideal. Never a hostile shot at his country's foes, not even the gold chevrons of overseas service had been his portion, but the mere accident of change from a Southern to a Northern navy yard had laid him open to the exposure that had claimed his life for his country's cause. Was Sam, then, to flinch for a mere matter of money? Somehow the Lord would provide.

"Poor John!" he sighed. "I'll see it through for you, old man!" he called softly, turning to follow after Sloan.

Two weeks later, Lieutenant Sam Hastings, F. N. R., was hurrying along the stone escarpment of Basin No. 4 in the navy yard. The afterglow from the setting sun shone redly behind the huge bulk, the towering basket masts, the battlements and turrets of a mighty dreadnought warped to the dock. Up the black tracery of a long, slanting gangway humped the moving figures of a chain of bluejackets, carrying in sacks of potatoes for her hungry storeroom. Black against the red sky loomed her thick funnels, with smoke drifting from their tops; black as an inky silhouette, the hoods of her ventilator cowls, the curved arcs of

her boat cranes, the lean muzzles of her secondary battery, high up in the superstructure.

Sam shivered as he battled his way against the keen wind, and he hastened up the officers' gangway to go below for a final inspection. Then he returned on deck with the chief engineer.

"Everything tiptop, captain!" said he cheerily to the four-striper who commanded. "Wish you a good voyage, sir!"

"Very good, Mr. Hastings," returned the captain gravely. "Duty complete, chief?"

"Duty complete, sir!" grinned that veteran. "We're all shipshape and Bristol fashion down below, sir. Sam's fixed us up fine!"

"Report it so, Sam," laughed the captain genially. "Gad, man, but you should have stayed right in your class with us!" he added, glancing down at the four stripes on his arm that Sam should be wearing, too.

"Well, good luck and God bless you!" said Sam, turning down the gangway and saluting the Flag as he went over the side. "That's one more for us, John," he whispered, as he turned his back on the grim, black hulk of the monster fighter, and sought the four-room quarters that are allowed a senior lieutenant in the yard.

And his wife is still asking, "When are you *ever* going to retire to inactive duty, Sam?"

THE END.

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JW

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